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ABSTRACT

The information counselor is defined as a generic information specialist who is capable of studying and understanding the information needs of the client and designing the operating information systems which meet those needs, regardless of the form of information management involved. This information counselor is portrayed as a consultant to client organizations, his or her prime function being to provide a coherent analysis of the client's problem and to suggest alternative strategic plans for solving it. The range of literature on this topic has been reconstructed to create a theoretical, conceptual framework which combines systems analysis and design with four stages--scouting, entry, diagnosis, and planning--from Kolb and Frohman's 7-stage model for the change process created by the consultancy. The business aspects of being a consultant, the work of the consultant, and the client-consultant relationship are outlined via the framework, with the emphasis being on what to do rather than how to do it. Interviews with professional information consultants in the Los Angeles/Orange County area have been summarized to balance the literature with a practicing perspective. Over 80 references are provided. (Author/FM)

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INFORMATION COUNSELING AND CONSULTING FOR THE ORGANIZATION

by

Richard S. Kraus

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT i

PREFACE. ii

INTRODUCTION 1

PART I: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SCOUTING. 7

1. Prelude: The Business of Consulting 8

2. Scouting. 17

3. Entrepreneurship and Scouting: A Practicing Perspective . . 21

PART II: ENTRY AND DIAGNOSIS 33

4. Digression: The Systems Approach. 34

5. Entry: The Formal and Psychological Contract. . 42

6. Diagnosis 48

7. Diagnosis: User Needs and Information Resources 54

8. Entry and Diagnosis: A Practicing Perspective . 67

PART III: PLANNING AND BEYOND. 73

9. Planning: Analysis and Synthesis. 74

10. Planning and Beyond: A Practicing Perspective . 91

PART IV: THE INFORMATION COUNSELOR/CONSULTANT. . . 98

11. The Information Counselor/Consultant. 99

12. The Information Counselor/Consultant: A Practicing Perspective . 103

EPILOGUE 109

APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY. 110

ENDNOTES 124

SOURCES CITED AND SELECTED SOURCES CONSULTED . . . 140

ABSTRACT

The "information counselor" is a generic information specialist who is capable of studying and understanding the information needs of his client and designing and operating information systems which meet those needs --regardless of the form of information management involved. This information counselor is portrayed as a consultant to client organizations; his prime function is to provide a coherent analysis of the client's problem and suggest alternative strategic plans for solving the problem. The wide range of relevant literature has been "reconstructed" to create a theoretical, conceptual framework which combines systems analysis and design with four stages--Scouting, Entry, Diagnosis, Planning--from Kolb and Frohman's seven-stage model for the change process created by the consultancy. The business aspects of being a consultant, the work of the consultant, and the client-consultant relationship are outlined via this framework, with the emphasis being "what to do," rather than "how to do it." Interviews with professional information consultants in the Los Angeles/Orange County area have been summarized to balance the literature with a "practicing perspective."

PREFACE

I first became interested in the topic of "Information Counseling and Consulting for the Organization" because of a term paper option offered in Professor Kenneth Plate's course on special libraries, which I took Fall Quarter 1979: we were asked to study and analyze the information needs of an organization (business, research and development, government, educational, social) that does not have any internal information service or special library, and to prepare a report proposing various levels of service to meet those needs (this assignment has been spelled out on page one of the Introduction). I felt that such an experience would be worth a try, in spite of my doubts as to how I was to go about doing it.

My initial inquiries with my selected organization fell through and time was running short that quarter, so I returned to my initial self-doubts about the assignment: what do I do? How do I do it? I did not feel my coursework nor my work experience had truly prepared me for taking on such a job. Dr. Plate had stressed that I would have to play the original assignment by ear, because there was no "recipe" for such work. He had further expressed an interest in seeing some attempt at developing a guide for this form of information consulting; with his encouragement, and some needed prompting and guidance from Professor G. Edward Evans' Research Methodology course, I decided to make that attempt myself. I divided the project into two parts: research of the literature (which served as my term paper for the course) and questioning the consultants who do this sort of work for a living.

In my research, I found that there is everything and nothing about my topic: I was only able to find one article which focused directly on my precise topic;[1] the rest of my work was inductive. I scanned a broad set of subjects from which I extracted and pulled together the material I needed--essentially reconstructing the literature--to assemble a theoretical and conceptual framework for the client-consultant relationship and the systems analysis and design involved in the preparation of a proposal report. I am audacious enough to believe that I, a complete novice in many of the relevant topics, can do this and offer something unique in the process--something borrowed, something new.

The interviews allowed me to discover and discuss the ideas, approaches, practices, and experiences of professional consultants. They provided a practicing perspective (hence the subtitle in the respective chapters) to balance my abstract, conceptual reconstruction of the literature. These interviews were free-flowing, one-to-one discussions which loosely followed my prepared checklist of questions. The interviewees will be kept anonymous in this paper (they will be identified as A, B, C, D, E, F, and G): their responses have been grouped to form the four parts of this paper, subarranged according to common themes and topics (phrased in the form of a question--NOT necessarily identical to the ones to which the interviewees responded); their words have been paraphrased and summarized rather than quoted. Please consult the appendix on methodology before reading the chapters with "a consulting perspective."

INFORMATION COUNSELING AND CONSULTING FOR THE ORGANIZATION

INTRODUCTION

Suppose you were given the following set of instructions:

> Study the information needs of an organization (business, research and development, government, educational, social) that does not have any internal information service or special library. Prepare a report, including:
>
> I. Analysis
>   A. Objectives, structure, and scope of the organization.
>   B. Communication patterns.
>   C. Internally generated information.
>   D. External information needs.
>   E. Present information system.
>
> II. Prescription
>   A. Level one: recommend improvements of present system.
>   B. Level two: level one plus the services of an information officer/librarian but no significant expenditure on collection.
>   C. Level three: levels one and two plus collection.

In short, the problem at hand is to analyze the information needs of an organization and propose various levels of service to meet those needs. The questions one might ask are: what do you do? how do you do it?

In order to answer these questions, this paper will explore the work of the "information counselor." Hershfield coined this term to introduce his concept of a generic information specialist who is capable of studying and understanding "human information needs, human information seeking behavior, and the design and operation of information systems structured to serve different client groups."[1] This information counselor concept is a developing one which touches upon the "frontiers" of the information industry; the status of the concept is revealed in Schick's comments:

> The information industry is presently grappling with an identity crisis. There is still a lack of consensus on the terminology to describe this occupation. "Information consultant" and "consultant for information" have been used as well as the phrase "information professional." Persons who have entered the field with a library background have been called, "free lance librarians," "alternative librarians," "peripatetic librarians," or "information brokers." And since this is the age of shortened words and short forms, "infotist" has also been suggested.[2]

The generic perspective implied by the information counselor concept is a current and important one and it suits the purposes of this report admirably. It is accepted that all organizations need information; however, not all organizations require a special library--or a Management Information System (MIS), or Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), or a document retrieval system. An important aspect of the generic perspective may be variously labeled as the client/patron/potential user service orientation. Thus, the point is not what form of information management is ultimately selected; rather, the focus is on the analysis of the client's needs and available resources which the information counselor then translates into alternative information systems, sources, and services that meet the needs by efficiently and effectively organizing the client's available resources. Schick summarizes:

> The image of the information professional is still categorized as "librarian" or "computer programmer." It is the responsibility of the information professional to keep current professionally, and dispel the incorrect image by providing a truly responsible professional service, where the solution is closely fitted to the situation.[3]

The Second National Information Conference and Exposition, 1978 (NICE II), drafted the following statement to define the domain of the information manager:

> The information manager directs the information management program which, at a minimum, encompasses the coordination and synthesis of the functional activities associated with libraries and information centers, records and archival programs, reports control, forms management, word processing, printing and publishing, paperwork management, and copying and reproduction programs.[4]

While such a sweeping definition is subject to debate, it does spell out the wide range of information activities included in the goal of applying information management skills to most any kind of information problem. The research done for this paper has borrowed from the literature of the librarian, the information scientist, and the management information systems analyst. Hershfield's following comments about the librarian applies to all three of these information specialists: the librarian has some of the abilities required for the information counselor, but it is essentially a new role they must learn to fill; moreover, their competencies, "intended for use primarily inside buildings called libraries, can be applied to information problems wherever they occur."[5] Each of these specialists has much to learn from the others: unfortunately the literature reflects a need for greater communication among them.[6,7] This paper borrows liberally from all three fields in order to derive a generic approach to the problem.

The information counselor portrayed in this paper will be assuming the role of consultant to the client organization. According to one author, the consulting business "probably started the first time somebody asked a colleague, 'How do you ____?'"[8] Essentially, a consultant is one who can provide expertise, experience, an outside point of view, persuasiveness, and/or extra manpower not available within the organization's or client's own resources.[9] Kolb and Frohman identify two central issues in the consulting experience: (1) the client-consultant relationship; and, (2) the nature of the work itself.[10] This paper will explore both of these issues in considerable depth.

Kolb and Frohman's two central issues will be addressed via the systems approach. The systems approach is by far the predominant one in the literature; in fact, this approach is inherent in the statement of the problem given on page one. What is particularly noteworthy is that the systems approach is the one used by information scientists, librarians, and management information systems analysts and designers: the objectives, the methods, and the terminology may differ--but the underlying approach is the same:

> The analysis of a system is concerned with the identification of the elements and the relationships between these elements. The goal may be (1) an understanding of this system, (2) to make changes to this system to make it "better," or (3) to define a new system.[11]

Kolb and Frohman have proposed a seven-stage model for the change process created by the consulting experience: (1) Scouting, (2) Entry, (3) Diagnosis, (4) Planning, (5) Action, (6) Evaluation, and (7) Termination.[12] This model incorporates both the development of the client-consultant relationship and the systems approach to doing the work itself. The information counselor/consultant to be portrayed in this paper would be regarded as a planning specialist by Kolb and Frohman: his participation in the consultation process ends with the fourth stage of the model.[13] The chapters of this paper have been arranged to correspond to the first four stages of Kolb and Frohman's model.

Finally, this chapter will close with three trends noted by Gilchrist in the information consultancy performed by Aslib. These trends tie together much of what has been mentioned thus far regarding the generic information counselor, the systems approach, and the consultant as a planning specialist; in so doing, they set the stage for the rest of this paper:

> 1. The 'trend is towards the application of skills and experience to information problems, rather than to isolated departments with information functions.'

(CONTINUED)

2. Consultation projects calling for the establishment of special libraries now focus on problem identification and the formulation of objectives, with some elements of general education; implementation is a different activity for which the consultant may serve as an advisor.

3. Consultation projects also involve a greater amount of evaluation, especially for organizations having long-established libraries and expecting economic "belt-tightening."[4]

PART I: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SCOUTING

1. PRELUDE: THE BUSINESS OF CONSULTING

The successful consultant is an entrepreneur. The focus of this paper will be the work and client relationship of the information counselor/consultant; however, this chapter is presented as a prelude because the consultant must be in business before he can get the business--and the work that comes with it. The consultant's work and the consultant's business are not mutually exclusive topics; the distinction lies in the point of view: the successful consultant is in the business of reaching his market, getting the jobs, and satisfying his customers; the competent consultant is in the profession of knowing his clients, analyzing their information needs, and proposing recommendations that meet those needs. This chapter will address the business of consulting by providing an introductory overview of the elements of successful entrepreneurship and small business management.

The information counselor may serve as a consultant in any of a number of "occupational modes": moonlighting/sidelining academic or practicing professional; staff member of a large consulting firm or of a small information consulting firm; representative or staff member of a governmental body or professional organization; individual freelancer; head of one's own consulting firm. Although the approach taken here in this chapter emphasizes the latter two "modes," it should become clear that the various "modes" share many of the elements for success, varying primarily in their degree of emphasis.

In their management textbook, Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management, Schollhammer and Kuriloff set forth the following four key and fundamental requirements for becoming an entrepreneur: 1) know yourself; 2) know the business; 3) know marketing; 4) know financial management.[1] The discussion which follows will elaborate on each of these requirements.

Knowing yourself means recognizing what characteristics, if any, you share with successful entrepreneurs: are you the type? Dible, in his informative and readable book, Up Your OWN Organization!, warns that "Starting a business and handling the hundreds of details necessary to get it firmly established is probably one of the most grueling tasks a man can undertake."[2] A significant amount of research, particularly that of David C. McClelland, has revealed a unique pattern of psychological and personality characteristics associated with successful entrepreneurs:

1. Need for achievement; commitment to excellence; desire to be a winner.
2. Commitment to the task; energetic; stick-to-itiveness; willing to assume responsibility.
3. Aggressively take on realistic risk, but not gamble; choose moderate risk.
4. Alert to opportunities and quick to seize and convert them to advantage.
5. Objective, realistic, unsentimental, business-like approach to solving problems.
6. Need and stimulated by feedback on performance.
7. Self-confidence; optimistic in novel situations.
8. Value money more as a measure of success than for wealth itself.
9. Proactive manager: future-oriented; skillful organizer.[3,4]

Provided that there is some match or tendency toward entrepreneurial traits, the need for achievement (the essential characteristic) may be heightened to improve one's entrepreneurial potential:

1. Think like an achiever: think of newer and better ways of doing things and of newer and better things to do.
2. Adopt the language of achievement: positive language to support positive thinking.
3. Plan for achievement: set long and short term goals in writing and check progress periodically.
4. Behave in a positive fashion; show creativity and innovation.[5]

Moreover, it is worth considering why you want to go into business for yourself: what are the rewards and costs? The rewards derive chiefly "from doing what one wishes, being one's own person."[6] Dible expands on these rewards by identifying the reasons for going off on one's own and for bailing out of corporate/bureaucratic life: the entrepreneur is getting into his own business for its own sake and in order to get out of someone else's business. People go into business for themselves because they desire: to be their own boss; fame; personal fortune; the pure joy of winning. They exit from corporate life because of a) inadequate corporate communications; b) an inequity between major contributions and financial rewards; c) promotion and salary policies; d) employment security; e) corporate politics and nepotism; f) red tape; g) orphan products; h) questionably relevant educational requirements.[7]

On the other hand, costs are incurred from the "sacrifice of many amenities of life, social interaction, and the pleasures of family living." Entrepreneurship can require a 10-to-12 hour day, seven-day work week. Moreover, even the entrepreneur is never completely free of bosses: customers/clients, government agencies, investors, the entrepreneur's own limited resources all influence the small business venture.[8]

Knowing the business means having a solid background in the business you hope to enter:

> It is demanding enough to manage the myriad details of setting up an enterprise and getting it established without at the same time trying to learn the intricacies of an unfamiliar business--to acquire the know how of its customs and practices.[9]

The bulk of this paper will describe, in largely theoretical terms augmented by the views and advice of some experienced professionals, the business of the information consultant; however, it does not pretend to be a substitute for study, training, practice, and experience. Broad, well-rounded experience and/or knowledge of the business is a prerequisite:

> If possible, the prospective entrepreneur should structure his work experience prior to starting his own business so that he has an opportunity for exposure to those key areas that will dramatically influence the success of the enterprise he launches.[10]

Moreover, the intelligent entrepreneur recognizes what he does not know and will seek out others to complement his skills and make up for his deficiencies."[11]

The knowledge of marketing--in practical, rather than theoretical, terms--may mean the difference between success and failure of the small business. The entrepreneur should know how to:

- --identify his segment of the market
- --reach his potential customer/client
- --identify the needs of a potential customer/client and convert them into wants
- --set prices
- --manage the total marketing task [12]

Marketing should not be confused with selling: "Making sales is the end result of a carefully planned and effectively carried out marketing strategy." Marketing does not consist of isolated, random, unmanaged activities: it is a "system of business activities designed to plan, price, promote, and distribute want-satisfying products or services to existing and potential customers at a profit."[13]

Customer orientation is the essence of the marketing concept: "satisfying the needs of your customers is the only reason for the existence of your company." Thus,

1. All planning, policies, and operations of your business should be oriented toward the customer in some way.
2. Your business objective should be to make sales at enough volume--and a high enough price--to produce adequate profit for the time, energy, and money you've put into the business.[14]

Information is a consulting service, and the marketing of services is in some ways unique from the marketing of a product:

> In market analysis, the market segmentation, pricing, promotion, and distribution, as well as the procedures of planning for the marketing of services, are essentially the same as for products. The major differences lie in the distinctive characteristics of services and the resulting close relationship between seller and buyer.[15]

Kuriloff and Hemphill, in their excellent guidebook, How to Start Your Own Business...and Succeed, outline the major distinctive characteristics of any service business and suggest the implications of each for the entrepreneur's marketing strategy: their discussion is highlighted here.

A service is a performed intangible, as opposed to a produced, tangible product. A customer must rely on the reputation and image of the service because he cannot evaluate its quality in advance. The service entrepreneur's sales effort must focus on the benefits the customer will get from the service--not the service itself.[16]

The buyer and the seller of services are interdependent. The consumer must be able to communicate his need and the seller must create the opportunities for the customer to reveal his needs. Consequently, the value of the service to the customer often depends on the quality of the personal relationship between the customer/client and entrepreneur/consultant.[17]

The service and the seller are often inseparable. The customer is buying the seller of the service as well as the service. The entrepreneur creates, performs, and markets the service simultaneously. This inseparability means that direct personal selling is the only possible channel of distribution. It also implies a limit upon the business' scale of operation--that limit being the entrepreneur's capacity for supplying the service.[18]

The service business is perishable and its quality is difficult to standardize. A service is limited by its supplier's capacity for providing it; moreover, it usually has a short-lived usefulness for the buyer. Thus, it cannot be stored or sold to meet fluctuations in consumer demand. As a result, the entrepreneur must confront the need to find ways to use idle facilities or to stimulate demand during thin times. Services are also perishable in terms of being person-intensive, subject to human frailty: the entrepreneur's responsibility is to strive for consistent, high-level performance.[19]

The seller or marketer of a service usually considers himself as a creator, producer, professional, or specialist and takes pride in his expertise and performance. However, the marketing approach that has been briefly described thus far and particularly the marketing concept/ customer orientation mentioned earlier are even more important for a service business than for a product. The distinctive characteristics of a service business given above suggest some of the reasons for this. Above all, the service entrepreneur should bear in mind that "the buyer almost always has the option of doing it him- or herself." Thus, he must cater and "market" the service and performance to the specific needs of the client/ "customers."[20]

Knowing financial management means knowing enough about how to plan for and obtain the money needed to start a new venture and to keep the small business alive and growing.[21] After all, "even a shoestring operation requires a shoestring for a start."[22] The business plan/

proposal/prospectus/brochure is the basic tool for checking the accuracy and completeness of one's own planning and for opening transactions for raising capital or borrowing money from investors.[23] It incorporates, in documented detail, the entrepreneur's qualities and qualifications, the service to be provided and how it will be marketed, and the resources required. The underlying theme of the business plan looks like this schematically:[24]

$$\text{You} + \text{Idea} \left(\begin{array}{l} \text{Money} \\ \\ \text{Credit} \end{array} \right. + \left(\begin{array}{l} \text{Facilities} \\ \\ \text{People} \end{array} \right. \rightarrow \left(\begin{array}{l} \text{Product} \\ \ \ \text{or} \\ \text{Service} \end{array} \right. + \text{Marketing} \rightarrow \left(\begin{array}{l} \text{Money} \\ \\ \text{Credit} \end{array} \right. \rightarrow \text{Profit}$$

Dible suggests that its fundamental purpose is to give "credibility to an idea" by conveying credibility (optimism tempered by recognition of the realities of the marketplace), authority (sophisticated knowledge of the market and mature business judgment), and ingenuity (pizzazz).[25]

Finally, there is managerial competence: many a business has been started only to fail because of bad planning or because of poor management. Schollhammer and Kuriloff define the proactive manager as one who anticipates and plans, rather than responding only as emergencies come up (reactive manager). The proactive manager has the technical competence for delivering the product or service and for isolating, evaluating, and developing a sound business idea. He also has the technical competence for performing managerial functions such as planning, organization, personnel, marketing, control, and organizational development. Last, but not least, he has interpersonal competence for managing relations with and among people--employees, investors, and customers.[26] Such managerial qualities are essential to success, leading Dible to advise that "the optimum time for an entrepreneur to test his capabilities as a manager is before he goes into a business of his own."[27]

This chapter has only skimmed the surface; an in-depth, how-to treatment of entrepreneurship and small business management is beyond the scope of this paper. The sources that have been cited represent a prime sampling from a number of excellent works which cover the adventure and nitty-gritty of small enterprise from the ground up and are recommended for the prospective entrepreneur in information consulting.

2. SCOUTING

In the beginning . . . there is the client and his sense of "dissatisfaction"--the "subconscious feeling that something is wrong, which gradually becomes expressible as a conscious statement."[1] A number of things may create a need for change, such as a problem requiring a solution, the "desire to find a better way to do what is currently being done," an attempt to respond to suggestions and ideas or newly imposed requirements, or opportunities created by new ideas, technology, techniques.[2,3] (A little side note: this last condition need not be confined to new computers and the like. Armstrong notes: "It has taken a long time to convince the businessman that the company library is not for education or recreation--but purely for exploitation.")[4] Action in response to the need may be motivated by the potential return on the investment, management's desire or involvement, technical feasibility, or the critical nature of the organization's need (e.g., may need to act in order to proceed with subsequent actions).[5]

Next comes the client's attempt at "orientation"--he makes a conscious effort to become familiar with the situation by talking to people and sizing up the problem. When the client decides to seek the assistance of a consultant, the Scouting stage begins.[6]

It is important for the information counselor to appreciate what the client does--or should do--before contacting him as a prospective consultant. Blasingame asks five questions for the client to consider before deciding to seek a consultant's help:

1. Does the client feel the problem is one for which he "may reasonably seek outside help or is it really one to which he should apply his own expertise and authority"?
2. Has the problem been defined carefully enough to make sure the knowledge and skill required to solve it are not available within the organization?
3. "Does it seem likely that consultants are available who can make useful recommendations, in general line with the institution's overall goals?"
4. Does the organization have the "temper and will" to act upon recommendations which may call for a great deal of energy and funds?
5. "Is there the prospect of obtaining enough money to hire an expert of the required ability for the necessary period of time?"[7]

The purpose of Scouting for the client, once the decision has been made to begin the search, is to find and investigate as many prospective consultants as possible. The client should approach the selection of a consultant in much the same way he would approach the hiring of a permanent staff member.[8] The consultant's name may be brought to the client's attention via word-of-mouth referrals; the consultant's reputation; the consultant's proximity; prior knowledge of, or contact with, the consultant and his work; listings in a consultant directory;[9,10,11] and/or via the promotional-marketing efforts of the consultant himself.

It is the client's responsibility to obtain information about, and recommendations for, each prospective consultant. The consultant should not be offended if the client requests references from his prior clients. The client needs to find out if the consultant has handled problems of type and scope similar to that now confronting the client organization: What skills did the consultant demonstrate in dealing with the problems? How practicable were his recommendations? Did the consultant provide support during implementation? Did the consultant complete the job within the original time and cost estimates? The other, interrelated area of concern is whether or not the consultant fit in well and worked smoothly with previous clients? What are the qualifications and personal attributes of the consultants? What approach(es) does the consultant use for problem-solving? How much assistance does the consultant require from clients? Is the consultant a generalist or a specialist?[12,13]

Thus far, the discussion has been from the client's point of view. This view has been idealized to some extent; in the library and information field, the selection of the consultant "has been often a catch-as-catch-can matter"[14] because the profession is still in its infancy. Kolb and Frohman present the consultant's side of the Scouting stage in which he "is also scouting his own interests, values, and priorities in order to decide whether this client system is one with which he wants to work."[15]

The consultant bases his decision on a preliminary assessment of the client organization. He should have some idea of what has preceded the client's contacting him: "What about their perception of the problem and myself led them to contact me?" He should look at a number of characteristics of the organization, such as its major resources and constraints, its major subsystems and their gross interrelationships, its "attitudes toward change, authority, outsiders," and its motivations for self-improvement. The preliminary assessment should produce two results: the decision of whether or not to meet with the client at all, and, if yes, "the choice of a formal entry point in the client system." With regard to the latter, the consultant needs to be aware of the contact client(s)'s interest in change and his/their ability-power-authority within the organization to effect the acceptance and implementation of change. Assuming both the client and the consultant agree to meet, the Entry phase comes next.[16]

3. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SCOUTING: A PRACTICING PERSPECTIVE

How do you get into the business?

What resources do you have? As a budding entrepreneur/consultant, you must start by taking a good hard look at yourself. Knowing yourself is answered, in part, by the responses to the second question in this chapter (What is consulting like as a business?) and by the two questions in Chapter Twelve (What qualities make you a good and successful consultant? How do you prepare and train for a career in consulting?): do you have what it takes to survive the business and do the work? Beyond this, it means examining yourself in marketing terms. F asks: who are you? what is your business? what aspects of yourself are you selling? to whom are you selling yourself? is there a market for what you have to offer? G adds: do you have the temperament and ability to strike out on your own in the business world? Pamela Sanders Autrey, a freelancer, suggests inventorying your skills, interests, experiences, and training:

> Have a broad mind--use your imagination to figure out ways your skills can be applied to different types of work. This requires a goodly amount of self-confidence and the ability to sell yourself.[1]

D advises seeking anything you can capitalize on.

The people you know make up the second resource. Darlene Waterstreet, a freelance information broker, points to the need for contacts: the more you have in the information field and particularly among your potential clients, the easier it is to get started.[2] The consultants interviewed commented on the need for, and use of, connections in response to the question, "How do your clients find out about you?" which will be reported later in this chapter. Several of the consultants got their big break through people they knew: E was invited to join the Special Libraries Association Consultation Committee for Southern California shortly after graduation by one of her professors; G received his first job when a prominent individual in the data base business subcontracted a project to G's firm; C was very fortunate to make social contact with a patient and capable accountant who became a member of her firm. F suggests another dimension of people-as-a-resource: she strongly recommends having someone to bounce your ideas off of. She cites how several of the major consultants in the area were originally partnerships; in her own case, her computer specialist husband serves as her idea bouncer.

The last--but certainly not least--key resource is money. It takes money to make money, and you need enough capital to live on even when business is slow. F recommends having at least one year's income just to pay the rent and buy the groceries even if no business comes your way. Waterstreet adds the need for expenses and supplies, as well as living, thus her "rule of thumb" is "at least two years living expenses available before trying this type of experiment."[3]

Given the resources, you must have a plan--actually, two plans: a marketing plan and a financial/business plan. The marketing plan begins with assessing yourself and what you have to offer, as mentioned before; it concludes with the strategy for reaching potential clients (described in the third question in this chapter). In between these two points are a host of other marketing questions. G asks: what kinds of services will you offer? who might your clients be? who might your competition be? George Schlukbier, director or Info Bank in Canada, recommends using your information skills to research your market and your competition: read up on potential clients and competitors: interview them if possible. Next, he suggests listing the services you can perform and practicing an explanation of your business on nonlibrarians to help you better understand your business.[4] C explained that her business changed significantly from her original plan to provide documentation services and design libraries into a broad-based information management firm: she moved into new areas because she perceived a need, saw an opening, and was willing to feel her way and learn.

The financial/business plan entails the nitty-gritty of doing business. Schlukbier is in favor of securing the services of a competent small business accountant and a talkative business lawyer to advise you about financial and legal matters and to support your application for a small business loan.[5] G raises several questions concerning one's business plan: how will you market your services? (depends on your clientele and your budget) how and how much will you charge for your services? (depends on the competition, the economy, and your overhead). How will you organize your business? partnership? incorporate? individual? (consider expected workload and earnings, amount of risk you want to take, and tax laws). Some of the other "nitty-gritty" matters raised by a Syracuse University School of Information Studies Workshop on alternative information careers included: choice of a name, hiring staff, handling routine office procedures and record management, listing in the Yellow Pages (if and where), designing stationery, business forms, contracts, and brochures, and choosing a location for your firm.[6]

Knowing how and what to charge for your services is a particularly important issue among information consultants--especially because clients must be educated about the value of improving their information resources. Christopher Samuels, a former librarian and consultant and currently an information broker, urges all information professionals "to find out exactly who uses your services and why, quantify it, put dollar signs on it."[7] B charges by predicting the necessary time to do a job, placing a value on his time, estimating what the client might be willing to pay, and cutting corners to stay within the budget; he reports learning from experience to charge what he feels he is worth. D, unlike some of the others, charges for every meeting she has with the client: she does not do implementation jobs, thus part-time consulting *is* the work for which she seeks pay. *B* and *C* believe the consultant should demonstrate the value of revamping the client's information system by revealing how much time and money the client wastes.

The consultants interviewed may be informally grouped into three "occupational modes" by which an information counselor may serve as a consultant: *A* and *D* are currently library school professors who consult on the side; *B* and *E* are independent freelancers; *C* and *F* are the presidents of their own respective information counsulting firms. *G* is a partner in his fledgling consulting firm.

What is consulting like as a business?

The most revealing assessment of consulting was made by *A*: to ignore the business end of it is to ignore the problems. The practicing consultant, particularly one who relies on consulting for making a living, must face up to the realities of running a viable business; these problems may be greater than those of actually performing the work itself. George Schlukbier, director of a research and information consulting firm in Canada, bluntly states:

> In my opinion the most important statement that I can make is to remind the reader that alternative librarianship means going into business. . . . Business is business, the desire to sell a product and make a profit.[8]

Breaking into information consulting, as with any other entrepreneurial activity, is a very tough struggle. According to *D*, the newcomer has to scrounge for jobs and settle for the dregs that no one else wants; business is financially tight at the start. *G* is still in the "struggle stage," still learning, not yet certain of his niche in the market. The market is already carved up to some extent: *D* says certain firms or consultants become identified with particular services in particular areas. *B* also recognizes the difficulty of starting out: he claims the first two years are an uphill battle. *C* suggests four years as the time required for establishing yourself, unless your credentials and qualifications are outstanding to begin with. *F* describes going into business on her own as "scary," even though she had over twenty-five years of professional information experience and over ten years of consulting experience when she started her own consulting firm.

It may seem antithetical to the tradition of cooperation in the library profession, but consulting is an exceedingly competitive business. *C* commented that she does not find information consultants talking very much to each other, thus denying fellow professionals the opportunity for mutual learning. *D* goes even further, noting that consultants will resort to underhanded ploys to "psych out" the competition and secure an "inside line" with the client to get the job. *D* adds that consultants are particularly careful not to leak out any of their ideas about services or the needs of potential clients in order to maintain a following of loyal clients and stake out their territory (what they do and where they do it) in the marketplace. F suggests that it is largely a matter of how secure the consultant feels about what they have to offer. C, a very successful consultant, sees her strength as not being what secrets she possesses but, rather, her ability to do the job and do it well; F feels no one can take away her talent--she has the skill and experience to go with the know-how. The security of their positions is reflected in C's willingness to share her experiences in the literature and at conferences, and in F's not feeling affected by the competition.

There are some cooperative aspects to the business as well: competitive bidding for pure consulting work that does not involve a government contract is generally frowned upon and avoided; in addition, many consultants do not hesitate to give referrals to colleagues if they feel the client would be better served by someone else.

A Syracuse University School of Information Studies Workshop on alternative information careers surveyed a number of information brokers, freelancers, and consultants about the nature of information entrepreneurship:

> In short, participants generally recognized that this kind of enterprise entails hard work and long hours and does not bring instant wealth.[9]

This theme is repeated time and time again. D finds the long, hard hours to be a greater sacrifice than she wanted to make and cites this as the reason for only doing it part-time. _F_ is wistful about the activities she has sacrificed and once complained of feeling very lonely because her work consumed her life. _F_ adds also that the work can be thankless, particularly when the client drops the project. Darlene Waterstreet warns:

> There may be times between clients, especially when starting, when you would trade the total independence you have achieved by not having any work to do, for one old-fashioned library payroll check.[10]

_A_ considers consulting a difficult business to sustain; nearly all the consultants perform other tasks such as indexing, data base searching, document delivery, or part-time work in a library, or, like _B_, they enjoy the luxury of pursuing other interests such as writing and teaching. _A_ also notes that as a professor, he is secure in his economic base and does not depend on consulting for his living.

On the other hand, consulting has its rewards as well. _C_ calls it stimulating and exciting work in which there is constant learning about information management and about what clients do; she adds that success itself, for those able to achieve it, is gratifying. _E_ appreciates the variety and the challenges and finds them more appealing than the routine and the persistent problems which make up the usual library job. _B_ likes being able to keep as busy as he wants to at this point in his career, while making full use of what he feels he has to offer.

How do your clients find out about you? How do you select a client?

Alice Sizer Warner, Warner-Eddison Associates, Inc., answers the first question for most all of the consultants:

> We have found that the most important, the best source of new business, is word of mouth referral, while the most lucrative is repeats, because the cost of sales is virtually nil at that point.[11]

Several consultants expressed this more concisely: happy clients are good for business. But word of mouth, repeat business, and happy clients do not simply happen: what can the consultant do to create them? Here there is some difference of opinion.

A, in particular, does not believe that pure consulting (as opposed to other information services and products) is likely to benefit greatly from a marketing campaign. In his experience, consultants are hired on the basis of their established reputation in the field, the fact that they have been published, their research work, and their track record on particular jobs. Thus, he considers brochures, pamphlets, and advertisements as virtually useless; they may create name recognition but they will not directly produce a line of clients knocking at your door. Some of the others agree with *A*, at least with respect to advertising. *E*, *G*, and *D* do not advertise at all, relying primarily on word of mouth and repeat business generated by their successful past work and, as will be described shortly, their contacts/connections.

Others admit that the bulk of their business comes from the sources cited by *A*, but nevertheless make an effort to promote their services. B has done direct mailings to law firms: he obtains the names of the office managers (the most appropriate target for his services) from a law firm directory and sends an apparently personalized letter to get it past the trash can. C has her firm listed in every possible directory; these listings do not receive many direct responses, but they do help establish credibility. F recognizes that a mailed advertisement generally yields a small return for the investment, yet she spent several hundred dollars designing and printing a brochure: she seems satisfied with the results, claiming that the brochure has paid for itself in new business.

There is substantial agreement on the need to actively cultivate contacts and connections. D advises the consultant to spend a considerable amount of time and effort at this, because there is no guarantee that all the contacts you make will produce the jobs you want--you miss a lot of times. E takes advantage of her contacts made through her Special Libraries Association Consultation Committee work and during professional conferences. C and F are active participants in professional conferences, associations, and seminars. According to D, and to Warner herself[12] Warner's extensive social contacts and attendance at business meetings paved the way for her firm.

B and G both discussed the need to create and promote a professional image. G, particularly since his firm is just starting out, says he has to work to convince prospective clients that he is the professional they want: thus he dresses appropriately and has polished brochures. B is rather cynical about how little substance there has to be behind the image, but he does not hesitate to promote his image by writing articles for publication in the journals read by his potential clients. Schlukbier believes librarians should learn how to sell:

> It is important to remember, a good sales approach is the genuine belief in the product you are selling. And the product you will be selling is yourself.[13]

D and F remind us, however, to make sure we have the substance--the service itself--to go with the sales pitch and flashy front.

Selecting the client involves knowing your limits in terms of what you can do and what you want to do. F feels that the competent consultant knows what he does not know. E, for example, will not take on jobs involving legal or medical information because they require a specialized expertise she does not have. B adds that the consultant should be certain that the problem is one for which a consultancy can truly help the clients: false expectations can only result in unhappy clients--and unhappy clients are bad for your business. Knowing what you want to do is equally important: B and F are both individual freelancers who are not economically pressured to hustle for jobs; they are in a position to pick and choose their consulting jobs and keep busy enough to be happy with their business.

D now consults purely to supplement her income as a professor: she too is selective, insisting on "interesting problems." A, as an academic consultant, takes on opportunities of "mutually supporting value" in which the client gains from the academic's knowledge from teaching and research, while the academic gains an in-depth, real-world understanding of a specific problem for use in his teaching and research. Darlene Waterstreet, a freelance information broker, asks the key question summarizing much of the above:

> If I took the job, would I do so only because I needed the money, or because I really felt the job was a part of what I was trying to accomplish?[14]

PART II: ENTRY AND DIAGNOSIS

4. DIGRESSION: THE SYSTEMS APPROACH

Basic to the systems approach is the question, "what is a system?" The underlying notion of a system stems from Aristotle's dictum: "The whole is more than the sum of its parts."[1] In general terms, a system is "a set or arrangement of things so related or connected as to form a unity."[2] These things, parts, components form the elements of the system and may be physical objects, activities, subsystems, or systems themselves. Each and every one of the elements is related, either directly or indirectly, to all other system elements across such dimensions as space, time, and cause-and-effect.[3,4] The "system objects, attributes, and relationships have been organized" for the purpose of working together toward the goals, ends, or objectives of the total system.[5,6] Finally, a system is bound by constraints which define its boundary and explicitly establish the limitations and conditions under which it operates.[7]

What is the systems approach? Burch and Strater identify three stages to the systems approach: systems analysis, systems design, and systems implementation.[8] Borko provides his classic definitions for the first two stages, which correspond to Kolb and Frohman's Diagnosis and Planning Stages:

> Systems analysis is a formal procedure for examining a complex process or organization, reducing it to its component parts, and relating these parts to each other and to the unit as a whole in accordance with an agreed-upon performance criterion. Systems design is a synthesizing procedure for combining resources into a new pattern.[9]

Murdick further distinguishes between two phases of design: Phase I design=feasibility study=conceptual design=establishment of performance specifications=gross design; Phase II design=detailed design=develop system operating specifications=systems definition=analysis and synthesis=systems acquisition.[10] It will be assumed here that the primary job of Kolb and Frohman's planning consultant concludes with Phase I design.

Why use the systems approach for the problem being studied here? The arguments are as follows:

1. The organization is a system.
2. Information is:
   a. a component of the organizational system.
   b. a system in its own right.
3. "The systems approach is organized, creative, empirical, theoretical, and pragmatic.[11]

The organization is a system. Ackoff, a management scientist, defines four essential characteristics of an organization:

1. It is a purposeful system containing at least two purposeful elements having a common purpose; that is, the parts of the system must be purposeful and they must have at least one purpose in common to "give unity and identity to their organization."

2. It has a functional division of labor for seeking the common purpose: different courses of action must be chosen and executed by different subsets of the system's elements.

3. "The functionally distinct subsets (parts of the system) can respond to each other's behavior through observation or communication": they become an organization by being able to influence each other.

4. At least one subset has a system-control function: it determines desired outcomes and adjusts system behavior to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved.[12]

Katz and Kahn differ from Ackoff in their presentation of an organization as an organism. Ackoff claims that "organisms do not contain purposeful elements"—"only the whole can display will; none of the parts can."[13] Katz and Kahn respond that it is a fallacy to equate the organization's purposes and goals with the individual purposes and goals of the group members.[14] This writer recognizes the conflict, but does not intend to explore the theoretical debate represented by Ackoff versus Katz and Kahn. The value of Katz and Kahn's ideas is that they emphasize the interaction between the organization, as an open system, and its environment: according to these authors, the organization is a complex open system which shares the nine following characteristics with all open systems:

1. They import some form of energy from the external environment; they are not self-sufficient or self-contained.
2. They 'transform the energy available to them': this is the through-put by which the input is reorganized, work is done, and a product or service is created.
3. They "export some product into the environment": this is the output of the organization.
4. This pattern of system activities forms a cycle of events: the output directly or indirectly (via exchange) furnishes the energy needed for the input so that the cycle may continue.
5. 'They must acquire negative entropy' in order to survive: this is done by importing more energy than is used, and storing the extra energy for leaner or crisis times.
6. Inputs include information as well as energy: information inputs 'furnish signals to the structure about the environment and about its own functioning in relation to the environment." Negative feedback is a basic form of information input which "enables the system to correct its deviations from course." The system's coding process selectively rejects or accepts-and-translates the information.

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7. They maintain a steady state in which there is a continuous flow of inputs and outputs, but "the ratio of the energy exchanges and the relations between parts, remains the same." Dynamic homeostasis serves to maintain a 'quasi-stationary equilibrium' by adapting to and compensating for external forces and even incorporating external resources--the system will expand and grow over time as new equilibrium "plateaus" are established.
8. They "move in the direction of differentiation and elaboration," becoming more specialized and complex.
9. They are characterized by the principle of equifinality: systems can follow different means and undergo different conditions to reach the same ends.[15]

From the preceding discussion, it should be clear that information is an important element within the organization as a system. In Ackoff's terms, information results from the observations and communications of the parts of the system. In addition, the part of the organization responsible for the system-control function (management) needs information to do its job. Referring to Katz and Kahn's concepts, information is identified as one of the inputs of the organization necessary for its functioning: the organization needs to know about its environment and about itself. Horton emphasizes that information is an extremely important resource for the organization; without the systems approach, that information resource is "suboptimized" to suit local interests while ignoring the relationships with information needs and systems of others.[16] Thus, the systems approach "deals with the information problem in a total context rather than in the context of a series of related but essentially separate problems."[17]

Moreover, the information element constitutes a system in its own right. Borko's standard definition of an information system states that it is "an organized procedure for collecting, processing, storing, and retrieving documentary information to satisfy a variety of needs." He diagrams the information system with collection as input, retrieval as output, and feedback from the output to the input completing the cycle.[18] Katz and Kahn's ideas are directly applicable for understanding the functioning of such an information system--with the organization it serves constituting a major part of its environment. Within the organization, the information system may be perceived as part of the division of labor (described by Ackoff) which provides the coding process (described by Katz and Kahn): a comment by Foskett regarding libraries reflects this idea:

> The role of the library in any organization is the same as that of any other part of the organization, namely, to help the management to achieve its aims, whether stated openly or not.[19]

Adelson characterizes the systems approach as "organized, creative, empirical, theoretical, and pragmatic."[20] The systems approach organizes resources from a number of fields and disciplines, including: education, public administration, management science, economics, mathematics, computer science, engineering, communications, and psychology.[21] Thus, it "permits the judgment and experience of experts in numerous fields to be considered in order to yield results that transcend the contribution of any single discipline."[22]

The systems approach is a very creative process in which the outcome depends on both the people involved and the resources available; it is not "an extensive, but cut and-dried set of steps that can be equally well performed by almost anybody."[23] It offers "a way of looking at a problem,"[24] in which the following must be carefully considered:

1. The breakdown of the problem: Optner advocates a process orientation which "conceives the problem as intrinsically complex," regardless of how simple it may appear, and breaks it down into "component, serially-related," parts which may be restructured to form a solution.[25]
2. The completeness and clarity of the available data and theoretical framework: Murdick and Ross warn that "Much of the available data are so incomplete, uncertain, or ambiguous that imagination of a high order must be used to form a theoretical framework for the problem."[26]
3. The generation of alternative solutions: These solutions "are not likely to be uniquely implicit in the data or the stated objectives; but they must be generated or devised so that they are consistent with the data and the objectives."[27] A new or old solution may be tried, according to the degree of comparability between the old and new problems.[28] The solution must account for possible future conditions and be optimal for both the subsystems and the total system.

The systems approach is both empirical and theoretical. It requires the use of the scientific method for gathering quantitative and qualitative data, and subjecting the data to objective evaluation and rigorous analysis; there are no shortcuts.[29] Theory and models enable us to exploit the empirical data and develop solutions:

> The structure is the skeleton, and the data provide the flesh that fills out the form. Different data may yield different forms but the theory provides the mold.[30]

The creative and multi-disciplinary nature of the systems approach contribute greatly to the development and application of theory.

Finally, the systems approach is pragmatic. The results it produces are action-oriented, meant to be useful in the real world:[31] they are "feasible, producible, and operable."[32] The approach responds to real needs and fulfills a set of actual purposes, thus it is goal oriented.[33] The analyst must adequately understand the organization and the organization should actively participate in the process.

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to draw some attention to the limitations of the systems approach. Borko warns that the systems approach is straightforward in concept, but it is very complex and difficult in its application.[34] The complexities of application will become evident in subsequent chapters; two examples of very real dangers include: (1) properly defining the boundaries of the system and the problem: it is quite possible to achieve a suboptimal solution by defining the situation either too narrowly so as to exclude relevant factors or too broadly so as to make the problem overwhelming; and (2) the use of theories and models provide a necessary framework, but can never supply a complete representation of reality.[35]

Borko has also cautioned us many times that the systems approach is "not a panacea":

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> It is not a black box into which one drops problems at one end and automatically receives solutions at the other.[36]

It is only a tool that helps organizational planning and decision-making: it cannot replace human judgment or decision-making; it is not infallible; "one should not confuse the tool with the solution or the method with the results."[37]

In spite of the length of this chapter, the discussion of the systems approach offered here has been necessarily superficial and even simplistic. The systems approach is a field of study in and of itself: this author highly recommends the bibliographic essay by McGill and Huitfeldt[38] for further guidance.

5. ENTRY: THE FORMAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT

Entry begins with the first meeting between the client and consultant which establishes the relationship. Schein calls this the "exploratory meeting" (which may take up half a day or more[1]) that defines "the formal and psychological contract."[2] Frohman lists ten areas in which the two sides must reach some agreement and mutual understanding:

1. the consultant's and the client's goals
2. broad definition of the problem
3. relationship of the problem to the overall system
4. client resources and abilities applicable to the problem
5. consultant resources and abilities
6. broad mode of approach to the problem
7. nature of the consultant/client relationship
8. expected benefits for the client
9. expected benefits for the consultant
10. ability of one party to influence the other[3]

The psychological contract is initiated during the first meeting which allows the consultant to "discover the local circumstances" and the client to "make his own estimate of the consultant's personal qualities."[4] It is here that the all-important mutual understanding and rapport, a collaborative relationship, must be established in order to ensure an effective and successful consultancy.

Messing has enumerated ten things which consultants expect from their clients, including: designation of the contact within the organization to someone with "sufficient access or breadth to be able to effectively represent the company in making the required decisions": willing provision of liaison in order to promote communication and cooperation; disclosure of concurrent programs, changes, and consultancies within the organization; open-mindedness about the results of the consulting experience; fair use of the results--that is, only to the intended breadth and depth; a post-mortem of the results to guide the consultant's future work.[5] Blasingame elaborates on the organization's responsibility for "clearing the way" for the consultant to proceed with his work:

> It is seldom wise for the consultant to be brought into an organization to make a study without giving some attention to how his presence should be recognized. Where the consultant is studying part of an organization, the individuals who may be immediately affected should be notified and given as much information as is feasible. Adequate announcement and explanation of the study should also be given to other staff members so that the normal uneasiness which accompanies such a visit can be kept to a minimum.[6]

Conversely, "the consultant should seek to develop and maintain a viable relationship with the entire management team since only management can implement his recommendations."[7] In the course of his work, the consultant would be well-advised to submit interim reports to summarize the current findings and set down the broad objectives which will serve as the basis for the final recommendations. Such interim reports serve to clear up possible major misconceptions, make sure nothing important is omitted, and reveal which aspects may require detailed--or especially technical--treatment.[8]

Schein firmly believes "that my client is not just the contact person or the person of highest rank, but the entire group with which I am working, and, by implication, the entire organization."[9] Thus, the sharing of control and involvement should include line management and organizational personnel as much as possible to create a more extensive enthusiasm, involvement, and support.[10] Neuschel recommends that the consultant be open-minded, willing to listen, frank, and tactful in presenting his ideas to the staff; he must also be persuasive enough to sell his points, while recognizing that he can learn from the staff as well.[11] In the end, "if sharing and involvement are achieved, final reports are summaries of agreements which have already been arrived at."[12]

The formal aspect concerns the preliminary definition of the problem and the services which the consultant will provide in response to that problem. This aspect of the negotiations should establish that there is a problem and that it is one for which "consultancy is both feasible and likely to be effective."[13] According to Blasingame, "it is almost axiomatic that the first inquiry to a consultant be so vaguely worded that the nature and scope of the work to be performed are not at all clear."[14] Gilchrist prescribes the consultant's response at the first meeting:

> The first important role of the consultant at this meeting is to test the client's evaluation of the situation by close questioning. In many cases, the question as presented by the client may not reflect the central problem. He may be aware of all the problems, but has been unable to place them in their proper relationship to each other or to rank them in importance. It can happen that a client arrives with his own 'solution,' asking for help in its

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> implementation. Sometimes, in such cases, his solution is a piece of equipment or a 'system' which he feels he would like to install, and subsequent discussion may indicate that the solution does not match the problem, or even that there is no problem! Very occasionally a simple piece of advice can remove the need for further investigation.[15]

Warner et al define problem identification as the determination of the need to be filled, the specification of some desired change. They specifically warn of the difficulty of doing this: it is very easy to define the problem too broadly or too narrowly and to mistake symptoms for the underlying problem. Moreover, the consultant must beware of his own tendency "to approach problems in the narrow context of his own experience and discipline." It is possible that the problem does not require an information system, even though the client has called in an information consultant:

> The essential skill to be developed is an approach to the problem area which allows him to perceive numerous alternative hypotheses about the problem area, at least some of which will be about information systems.[16]

Blasingame cautions the client to hold up his end of the discussion-negotiations, just in case:

> The consultant may describe the problem according only to his own personal biases; he may word parts of his proposal in such a fashion that it will be difficult to insist upon proper performance of the work; or he may intentionally or unintentionally neglect to mention certain aspects of a problem.[17]

The importance of the initial problem definition is underscored by Condon: "A major problem in business is that systems analysts often spend much time solving the wrong problems"; frequently, "the mistake is made at the outset of the feasibility study because too little effort is made to clarify the objectives" of the study.[18]

As a result of this meeting, the client and the consultant should draft a formal, documented agreement, contract, or proposal supporting the payment of costs and outlining the work to be done. Below is an outline of what should be included:

1. A clear but concise definition of reason for the study.
2. A definition of the scope of the study.
3. A statement of the objectives or constraints imposed upon the study.
4. A list of the steps involved in the study.
    a. An identification of the facts that will most likely have to be collected.
    b. An identification of potential sources where the facts will be obtained.
    c. A projection of any potential problems that may arise during the study.
5. A tentative schedule for conducting the study.
6. An estimate of human resources needed for the study.
7. An estimate of the cost of doing the study.[19,20]

The negotiation and preparation of this contract should be given considerable care; however, it is intended to serve as a guideline subject to revision because of changes in the nature of the problem, changes in the availability of resources needed for the solution, or because "the consultant's particular expertise may become more or less relevant to the client system."[21] The need for constant reassessment and reiteration, inherent to the systems approach, will be expanded upon in the chapter on Diagnosis.

The consulting experience should serve as a form of organizational planning. Rather than providing curative "first aid" for individual, immediate problems, the consulting experience should consider the organization as a total system and develop preventive measures.[22] Otherwise, the consultant ends up "narrowing attention to the issue at hand and the recommendations stemming from such myopic analyses can lead to impractical solutions."[23]

Schein defines three models of consultation:

1. the purchase model: the client diagnoses and defines the need and purchases expert information or an expert service from the consultant.
2. the doctor-patient model: the consultant is brought in to do a check-up, find out what is wrong and recommend cures, and the client is a passive patient.
3. the process consultation model: the consultant helps the client to help himself; 'the client must learn to see the problem for himself, to share in the diagnosis, and to be actively involved in generating a remedy.'[24]

The process consultation model reflects the true sense of planning and of the strong consultant-client relationship: "a good consulting experience results in the improvement of the organization's ability to anticipate and solve similar problems in the future."[25]

6. DIAGNOSIS

The steps in the systems approach overlap and form a continuous, iterative cycle; moveover, the entire process is influenced by the development of the client-consultant relationship. Thus, the conceptual division of steps or stages may be more arbitrary than realistic; Gilchrist explains:

> It is quite proper to attempt to list steps of systems engineering in order to show what should be done, but it would be as wrong to suggest, as it might be easy to accept, that practice is as neat and logical. In fact, everything tends to happen at once, apparently logical sequences become upset by subsequent findings and physical constraints (such as the availability of people for interview) play havoc with the timetable. In addition, the organization demonstrates that it is both dynamic and open. In practical terms this means that the organization is changing while the analyst is conducting his investigation, and so it is impossible to take a "snapshot" of a system. Furthermore, his temporary presence within the system tends to initiate change from the moment of his first contact. Not only is analysis made harder, but sometimes selected recommendations are implemented before the final report is presented. It is important for the consultant to be aware of, and to exert some control over, these factors.[1]

Throughout the consultancy, the information counselor will bear in mind the five basic systems considerations identified by Churchman:

1. The "total system objectives and, more specifically, the performance measures of the whole system." The analyst must ferret out the real objectives by asking "whether the system will knowingly sacrifice other goals in order to attain the objective." Performance measures provide a more precise and specific assessment of what the system actually does, rather than what it claims to do (objectives).

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2. The "system's environment: the fixed constraints." The environment "is what lies 'outside' of the system": "the system can do relatively little about its characteristics or its behavior." The environment includes things which the system must regard as fixed or given and which influence how the system performs.
3. The "resources of the system" are inside the system and provide "the means that the system uses to do its job." The system can change and exploit these internal resources which make up "the general reservoir out of which the specific actions of the system can be shaped."
4. The "components of the system, their activities, goals and measures of performance." The analyst here seeks the basic missions, jobs, or activities which form "the rational breakdown of the tasks the system must perform": these do not necessarily correspond to the traditional or labeled lines of division. Only the analysis of these basic missions permits an evaluation of the contributions of each activity to the total system and, from there, to determine "whether the system is operating properly and what should be done next."
5. The "management of the system" "sets the component goals, allocates the resources, and controls the system performance." In order to exert control, management needs to receive information via a responsive information-feedback loop that enables management to learn "when its concept of the system is erroneous and must include steps that will provide for a change."[2]

Churchman's considerations have been translated by Jackson and Jackson into less theoretical terms:

"1. What is the scope of our information-related problem? Company-wide? Division-wide? Function-limited? Project-limited: Geographic-location-limited? Domestic only? Internally-generated or external? Format-limited? Security-limited? Equipment-limited?
"2. What is the urgency of our information-related problem? Crisis situation? Management-level of awareness? Widely deplored? Just "keeping up with the Joneses"?
"3. What are the resources available to divert to the problem's eventual proposed solution? People? Materials? Facilities? Equipment? (Or, what can we do with the answer?)
"4. What is the company climate? (Only insiders know.)"[3]

Kolb and Frohman describe the Diagnosis stage as one which focuses on four elements: the client's felt problem, the client's goals, the client's resources, and the consultant's resources. Defining the specific problem requires an identification of the subsystems in which it is located and their interrelationships with the rest of the organizational system. Next, the client's goals must be defined with regard to the problem. Finally, the resources of the client organization must be evaluated in light of the problem and their appropriateness and/or availability as parts of a solution; the consultant's resources are also important, but the client's own resources should be exploited first so as to minimize his dependence on the consultant.[4]

The diagnosis of both the problem and the system should begin with the existing system. One typical argument for ignoring the present situation claims "that since a new system is being planned, that there is no existing system, or if there is one, it is known to be inadequate, and therefore it would be a waste of effort to examine the present procedures."[5] This argument is not valid because the analysis cannot, and does not, occur in a vacuum. It is rare to find no existing system whatsoever: "if people need information to perform their work, they will find some way to get it, even though their organization has no formal system to provide it."[6] In spite of the assumption made earlier in the statement of the problem (see page one), an information system of some kind can be said to exist within any organization; Weisman's definition of an information system suggests the broad possibilities:

> An information system consists of a complex collection of information "messages," persons who produce and use them, institutions which process them, and a set of behavior patterns, customs, and traditions by which these persons and institutions interrelate.[7]

Such an information system need not be integrated, coordinated, formally structured, or even recognized. An important example is the personal information system of the individual user; a study of these information (sub) systems is well-justified:

> They are accessible and dynamic; they represent the user's synthesis of formal information products and as such contribute constructively to his information use behavior; they provide coverage not fully duplicatable by the formal secondary and tertiary services; they serve an educational purpose by causing the individual to articulate--if only for himself--his rationale for structuring information and to define more closely his needs when he searches the file.[8]

At the very least, studying the present system fills the need to document ideas that have been tried and tested, past failures, and the rationales for alternatives chosen in the past.[9] Improvements and solutions depend on the recording and complete understanding of the "status quo --what are we doing and how are we doing it"[10] because the new rarely makes a radical departure from at least some of the rudimentary practices now in operation.[11]

The Diagnosis and Planning stages of the information consultancy can be faithfully translated into the first two of Horton's five steps for what he calls the "harnessing of information resources":

(CONTINUED)

1. Inventory and catalog information resources.
2. Analysis and synthesis of information resources.
3. Develop model for integrated information resource management system.
3. Test and refine the model.
5. Implement and evaluate.[12]

Horton's five steps are intended for designing an information system; the finished product in design is an operational information system. Our interest is essentially "predesign"; the finished product is a proposal offering alternatives. The first two steps overlap: the designer considers what has been presented in the proposal and he may have to reiterate those first two steps in order to update, clarify, and specify in greater and more specialized detail the necessary facts and data. In metaphorical terms, the distinction may be expressed this way: in predesign, one points out the alternative routes which may be taken to reach a determined direction; in design, one explores and maps a chosen route to a determined destination. The former is the realm of the generic information counselor; the latter is the realm of the specialist.

The first step--inventory and catalog information resources--involves the determination of user needs and the identification of information resources; these correspond, more or less, to Kolb and Frohman's diagnosis of the client's goals and resources. They also serve to delineate the client's problem: the basic problem in any information system is to "harness" information resources to satisfy human information needs. Horton spells out the reciprocal relationship between them:

> no one has ever gone into a closed room and listed his information needs and uses "in the abstract," without regard to available resources and some knowledge of constraints . . . information needs have never emerged full blown from a study of available resources, without benefit of the user's independent contemplation of his own needs.[13]

In order for the counselor to "make heads or tails" of the client's situation, he must study both user needs and information resources together because they are literally "two sides of the same coin." The next chapter will attempt to cover all bets.

7. DIAGNOSIS: USER NEEDS AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

What is information? There are a number of theoretical, pragmatic, and operational definitions of "information from disciplines such as information science, information theory, accounting theory, communications and linguistics. The definition of this deceptively simple idea is a study in itself and a source of plentiful debate; however, this is not the time to enter the fray. Ford provides a definition accepted by the University of Sheffield Centre for Research on User Studies which is broadly applicable and quite adequate for our purposes:

> "1. Information is the structure (or order) of any text which is capable of changing the image-structure of a recipient.
>
> "2. A Text is a collection of signs or sounds purposefully structured by a sender with the intention of changing the image-structure of a recipient."[1]

Weisman's definition supplements Ford's by calling attention to the importance of meaning: "Information is that which adds to, changes, or repeats a representation of what is known or believed to be known." It can be derived from experience, observation, interaction, as well as from reading; it may or may not be organized or structured.[2]

What are information resources? Horton defines three types:

1. Information source: A place that produces, compiles, and/or furnishes information and data to users. These sources include, but may not necessarily be, the place of origin for the information. A source is the answer to these questions: where do I go? to whom do I go for the information? Libraries, publishers, marketing departments, computer centers all function as information sources.[3]

2. Information service: A "helpful activity" to assist users in meeting information needs and requirements; a service collects information, provides references for finding information, and may even provide the sought information itself. A service answers the question, "what means do I select to find the information?" Library reference services, an abstracting service, public relations office programs are examples of services.[4]
3. Information system: A "structured process or procedure" for collecting, organizing, and distributing information or references to information. It facilitates services and answers the question, "how do I process the information?" (This definition is not substantially different from Borko's (see page 38) but it is much more restrictive than Weisman's (see page 51)).

Horton admits that all three terms overlap and ambiguity is almost unavoidable; all information resources may be categorized under one or more of these three types. Weisman offers a different definition for information service: "the system of resources, personnel, activities, and materials for providing specific users with data, information, counsel, documentation, and/or documents."[6] This differs from Horton's definition in that it includes the personnel and resources as well as the "helpful activity" itself: this definition indicates how any given information resource is in reality a combination of sources, services, and/or systems. It is less ambiguous than Horton's definition; however, Horton's has been introduced because his dicussion of the analysis of information resources will be used.

Who is the information user? For the purpose of this discussion, the set of users--or, potential users--includes all of the members of the client-organization for whom the proposed information system is to be designed; these users may be described as a "target market" defined during the client-consultant negotiations and the systems analysis. The information consultant conducts a user-oriented, organization-specific study: how do the members of this organization obtain the information needed for doing their work. Such a study should not be confused with the library-oriented study which focuses on how individual libraries or information systems/centers are used;[7] this paper assumes that no such formalized system exists within the organization. Our study is also distinct from the user study which seeks to contribute to a "general body of theory about the flow of information."[8] While such knowledge is of considerable value to the information counselor's requisite background in user needs and user study methodology, his focus here is on the much smaller scale of organization-specific application.

What do user studies study? This is a basic question which has been burdened by an accompanying argument over semantics and terminology. Line has made the following attempt at establishing some definitions:

> need: "What an individual ought to have, for his work, his research, his edification, his recreation, etc." "A need is a potential demand."
>
> want: "What an individual would like to have, whether or not the want is actually translated into a demand. . . . Individuals may need an item they do not want, or want an item they do not need (or even ought not to have)." It is also a potential demand.

(CONTINUED)

> demand: "What an individual asks for; more precisely, a request for an item of information believed to be wanted (when satisfied, the demand may prove not to be a want after all). Individuals may demand information they do not need, and certainly need or want information they do not demand. Demand is partly dependent on expectation, which in turn depends partly on existing provision of library or information services. A demand is a potential use."
>
> use: "What an individual actually uses." It may or may not be needed, wanted, and/or demanded, in full or in part. It is "heavily dependent on provision and availability" of information resources.[9]

Ideally, information resources will satisfy needs: these needs will be all that is wanted; the wanted needs will all be demanded; the information resources will provide for all the wanted needs demanded to achieve perfect use. Obviously, this is impossible. Needs themselves involve a value judgment (who can truly say what is necessary for himself or others?). People have wants beyond needs; demands require expression and communication; use depends on what is available. The information counselor can only hope to identify both needs and wants and provide information resources which can, at best, facilitate demand and use.

Why is the user so difficult to study? The preceding paragraphs should make many of the reasons clear. A related problem is the state-of-the-art for studying users. Vickers warns: "We believe that we do this kind of thing rather well, but I submit nonetheless that we have barely scratched the surface. . . ."[10] Lancaster suggests the difficulty--if not the futility--of a generic approach:

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> Unfortunately, although many studies have been conducted, and many data collected, few "universal truths" about users' information needs have been elicited. No generally applicable set of procedures or well-defined methods for studying users and their needs has been established, certainly none capable of application with appropriate local modifications in many different situations.[11]

The essential limitation of all the existing methods is "that one can only infer from the user's behavior or words what is going on inside his head."[12] Thus, a variety of methods should be employed to provide checks and balances against any possible bias and supply a valid and reliable analysis. The UNESCO Handbook lists over twenty available methods for "collecting information to design a system consonant with the users' needs."[13] Ford, in his useful guide to the literature of user studies, summarizes the available data collection techniques under three broad groups: Documents (files, reports, charts); Observations; and Questioning (questionnaires, interviews).[14] The prospective information counselor is advised to consult the literature on user studies and research methodology for an instructive and evaluative treatment of these methods.

The following are some "lessons learned," or ground rules, for the study of users:

1) "There is no such person as 'The User'!" Borko stresses that it is important to recognize that "Real users are many faceted individuals with real requirements, determined by real problems, requiring real solutions."[15] Users vary in terms of the sources they use and in their requirements for quantity, timeliness, accessibility,

relevance, as well as content.[16] Moreover, individual requirements change over time. Thus, any attempt to create an abstract, "average" user is "similar to adding apples and oranges." He suggests that it may be "more important to recognize the differences than the similarities in information requirements.[17]

2) "The information user is often the least qualified individual to identify his own needs and the uses to which he puts information."[18] While users should have some idea of some of the types of information they need, they cannot be fully aware of all their needs and their current resources do not necessarily reflect their needs, wants, or uses. Users and potential users of information are often not aware of sources nor how to locate and/or use them.[19] Horton recommends that the information counselor act as a "catalyst or crystallizer--helping the client define his own needs."[20]

COROLLARY: "A direct interrogative approach to identifying information needs and uses is often the least effective method of ascertaining those needs and uses."[21]

3) "Many studies have pointed to a correlation between the kinds of decisions which the user must make, and the nature of the information he needs and uses."[22] Ackoff, in his classic article on "Management Misinformation Systems," attacks the assumption made by many MIS designers "that managers know what information they need and want it." If a manager really does know "he must be aware of

each type of decision he should make (as well as does) and he must have an adequate model of each"; according to Ackoff, few managers have more than "some conception" of some of their decisions. As a result of this insufficient understanding of their decision-making, they play it safe and want "everything" in terms of information.[23]

4) Managers "suffer more from an over abundance of irrelevant information" than from "the lack of relevant information." Ackoff argues that while managers do lack relevant information, they are plagued more by too much information--much of it not asked for, irrelevant, and/or redundant.[24]

5) "It is necessary to determine how well managers can use needed information." It is often assumed that if the user is supplied with the information needed, he will be able to use it effectively. Ackoff, again writing about managers and decision-making information, points out that even perfect information cannot help the manager lacking the experience, judgment, ability, or intuition to use it properly.[25] Horton adds that managers must ultimately make their decisions whether or not they have sufficient information; besides, various users differ in their awareness of the value of an item of information and in their inclination to seek and use it.[26]

6) "Principle of Least Effort": users tend to exert as little effort as possible in seeking information.[27] Thus, people will tend to seek out information that is

most accessible and they tend to follow habitual patterns of information-seeking behavior.[28]

COROLLARY: "The amount of information used is often in direct proportion to available idle time."[29]

Given these ground rules, what are some of the approaches for ascertaining information needs? What kinds of questions should the counselor be asking? Horton echoes Lancaster's comment quoted earlier in assessing the state-of-the-art:

> Unfortunately, comparatively little research has been directed to identifying factors which might help us to understand how information needs can be determined in the first place, both as to substance and to form.[30]

However, the client may assume there is "some sort of tried and tested set of questions, or at least a general methodology."[31] Five approaches appear in the literature: 1) activities approach, 2) data analysis approach, 3) decision-making approach, 4) problem-solving approach, and 5) empirical approach.

The activities approach may be typified--make that caricatured--by the following:

> "Good morning, Sir, I'm Dennis Designer, the systems analyst assigned the job of designing your information system. Now if you'll kindly let me interview you for a few minutes, I believe we can quickly identify your information needs, and the uses to which you put information, and then I'll just go back to my office and design a system for you!"
>
> "Fine, where do we start?" responds the client.
>
> "Well, why don't you pick a 'typical day'; just sort of tell me what happens, what decisions and actions you take, what problems you solve, and so on."
>
> *****

(CONTINUED)

> "Could you perhaps give me some examples of what kind of correspondence you have, and, also what sort of things do you discuss in your staff meetings?"[32]

Werner et al argue in favor of this approach being used in conjunction with decision analysis: decisions must be deduced from the individual's functional activities because people "do not perceive themselves as decision-oriented, but rather as activity oriented."[33] According to Horton, the basic flaw in this approach is that it assumes "that all, or most of the information needed is to support functions, operations, and duties which are well defined, continuing in nature, and largely immutable in character. Of course, this assumption is simply not true."[34]

Munro, in a paper on "Determining the Manager's Information Needs" for MIS, outlines the data analysis approach:

"1. Examine all reports, files, and other information sources drawn upon by the manager.
"2. Discuss with the manager the use of each piece of information examined.
"3. Eliminate unnecessary information.
"4. Determine unsatisfied information needs through interaction with the manager."

The two major objectives are to determine what information is currently received and what information is needed but not received currently.[35]

The decision-making approach, or decision analysis, examines information "with respect to its direct utility at particular points in a decision process,"[36] asking the basic question, "What is the penalty of not receiving accurate, complete, timely and relevant information?"[37]

Munro lists the following steps:

> "1. Determine major decision responsibilities through discussion with the manager.
> "2. Determine policy and organizational objectives relevant to decision areas identified.
> "3. Determine specific steps required to complete each major decision.
> "4. Develop a model (flowchart) of each decision.
> "5. Examine flowchart to determine information required at each step in the decision."[38]

Munro assesses the relative strengths and weaknesses of data versus decision analysis in his article. Data analysis requires users to articulate their information needs and the analyst has no procedures or standards for establishing the validity of the needs claimed by the user. Decision analysis explicitly links information needs with decision-making, clearly demonstrating the value of each item of information and forcing the client to understand his decision-making. On the other hand, decision analysis is not very enlightening when the decisions are "routine, frequently recurring, and well-understood": the information required for such situations is readily identified without a decision analysis model. Still other decision processes may defy analysis: "Theoretically, any decision situation can be analyzed and modeled to determine its information requirements"; however, in many cases the relevant factors or variables in the decision and/or the extent to which they can be combined in a model (either a standard model from the literature or a case-specific one) are not understood well enough.[39] The decision analysis is most useful for tailoring to personal decision making styles and for analyzing previously unstructured decisions. Data analysis, conversely, offers more flexibility because the information needs are not placed in the specific context of decision-making steps, thus the analysis and resultant information flow may better withstand organizational, environmental, or personnel changes.[40]

Horton recommends the problem-oriented approach. In this approach, the analyst tries to "look behind and beyond formal job descriptions, functional statements, and organizational charts" by determining the problems faced by users--problems which cross the boundaries of the formal structure. This approach requires a full-fledged scientific method of observation, experimentation, and clarification: direct, interrogative interviews of a number of people within the organization, familiarizing oneself with the organization's operation--both written, formal and unwritten, informal.[41] This approach shares much in common with the decision-making approach, but it does differ in two respects. It emphasizes problems and problem-solving, which are related --but not identical--to decisions and decision-making. More importantly, this approach seems (to this writer) to be an extension of the decision-making approach because it crosses over the boundaries of the formal structure, rather than focusing on the decisions made by individual managers or users.

The approaches given so far, with the exception of the activities approach, are all functional approaches: that is, the analyst uses them to help the client define his own needs in terms of the functions the information and information resources serve (e.g., verify and authenticate, current awareness, background for briefings, entertainment, forecasting, etc.).[42]

The final approach is the empirical approach in which "the needs/uses requirement becomes an empirically determined component in information system development." This approach is more properly a part of information system design; it is brought up here because it is important to realize that the initial findings of predesign are ultimately modified by user feedback during the actual usage of the system.[43] Bourne provides several ways of using this approach, some of which could be tried in the predesign phase:

1. Postulate a particular system design and invite potential users to request its services.
2. Perturb the existing system with changes in services or procedures and observe user reactions.
3. Controlled experiment in which users work on the same problem and the variable introduced is the degree and type of information resources available.
4. Develop an experimental or pilot system and observe its use.[44]

Regardless of the approach used (and the choice can only be determined by the particular situation), the information resources required and/or used must be inventoried and cataloged to complete Horton's first step. These information resources must be classified by type, location, purpose, and content.[45]

1. "basic identification information": name, location, access; identify accurately and completely.
2. "status/sponsoring information"
   Is the resource now in operation? Is it still being planned? At what stage of planning? Is it inactive? When was it received? established? What is the justification for having it?
3. Detailed description:
   a. Information systems (Horton's definition, see page 55). Is it automated or manual? If automated, is it interactive or batch mode? What are its specific input and output characteristics? What are the primary reports generated? What are its objectives? What are the significant processing steps?
   b. Information services (Horton's definition, page 55). What storage media are used? What specialized services are offered? What kinds of information products (documents) are available? What subject areas are included? Is there any cooperative or network exchange? How may services be obtained? What user restrictions are there, if any?
   c. Information sources (Horton's definition, page 54). What are the scope and coverage of its subject holdings and subject awareness? What are the origins and primary sources for the data and information? How can the source be contacted? What classification systems are used? What user equipment requirements are there, if any? What user restrictions are there, if any? Completely identify all the information systems and services available from the source.[46]

This is the systems approach to information resources: it "looks at every facet and each stage of the problem":

1. purposes for which information is used: problem-solving, decision-making, retrospective search,etc.
2. functional parameters of information: public or private, current or historical, administrative or scientific, etc.
3. information transactions and manipulations: cataloging, indexing, abstracting, copying, etc.
4. information forms, media, and modes: manual or automated, structured, written or oral, etc.[47]

8. ENTRY AND DIAGNOSIS: A PRACTICING PERSPECTIVE

Who is your client?

The person you initially meet with may not necessarily be the client you are serving; the consultants agree on the need to determine who you are talking to and find out who you should be talking to. The key questions here are: where is the desire for the consultancy coming from within the organization? what level is that person from? can he commit his firm, or some part of it, to implementing change? how much money can he sign a check for? Sometimes identifying--or at least meeting--the client may be difficult because the appropriate manager maintains a low profile or communications within the organization are very poor. The problem varies with the size and complexity of the client organization: B, for example, deals primarily with small law firms and has had relatively little trouble. F suggests that all the people the consultant meets are clients, in a sense.

Knowing the client establishes the boundaries for the consultancy: the problem is defined and limited by who the client is. These limits should be borne in mind by the consultant who perceives the client organization's problem as extending beyond the contracted limits: A believes the consultant may not overstep these bounds in his analysis and proposal. However, it is generally considered acceptable to tactfully comment more broadly by pointing out the more complete context and nature of the problem.

B feels it would be his obligation to do this; he further recommends that the consultant consider if the limits may be so restrictive that they inhibit his ability to help the client. C uses a phase approach in which the localized problem is defined in its larger context so that the immediate proposed solution is compatible with a potential overall solution.

What kind of rapport or "psychological contract" do you try to establish?

A successful consultancy requires a cooperative, mutually understanding client-consultant relationship. You must build up the client's confidence in you, but without creating any false expectations or promoting an ongoing dependency.

F believes there is no single client within the organization: they all feel they are important and they all need attention: she considers the consultant to be like the doctor who must remember all of his patients. C believes in involving and boosting those who may be threatened by a new library or information system.

C portrays the consultant both as a student and a teacher. As a consultant, she has developed an expertise and shop talk ability on her own and by learning from the clients themselves. She invites her clients to talk to her about the situation at hand and about their business: this makes the discussions comfortable and easy for them because they simply talk about what they know. On the consultant's side, this becomes a learning opportunity.

She teaches by helping her clients think out the problem with her and projecting scenarios for suggested alternatives: the consultant impresses by sharing, not by acting mysterious.

B considers happy clients to be good business. A detailed proposal--in writing and jointly agreed upon--ensures a shared perception of the problem and of the consultant's role in responding to the problem. Never create expectations that cannot be satisfied.

D cynically denies giving much attention to establishing an especial rapport with the client. She does not expect anything of the client and feels she is better off that way.

How do you go about defining the client's problem? How do you study the client and the problem?

Defining the problem is an art. The goal is to achieve a shared perception of the problem: B warns that it is quite easy for the client and the consultant to be talking about very different things without realizing it--and with potentially disastrous results. A indicates that "nine times out of ten" what is presented as purely a technical problem is not that simple; if it were, there would not be a need for outside advice. According to F, what they say they want is not necessarily what they really want or need. Thus, defining the problem calls for probing beneath the surface, negotiating with tact, and educating.

D talks with the client at the first meeting and invites the client to provide a show-and-tell presentation of the situation and the people involved: C similarly asks the client to tell her about what is going on, and lets them discuss what they know and feel comfortable talking about in their own terms. D, in turn, looks around and asks a "million questions" in order to understand exactly what they are saying and what they want to do; such clarification is required because the client's presentation may be unclear or the clients themselves may be uncertain about the problem or what they want. B will not hesitate to belabor a point in order to be sure. A says the key is knowing how to listen to what they say--and what is underlying their words. F compares this probing to psychoanalysis: you have to spend time with people and talk to them.

The problem is defined via negotiation and education. The consultant takes what the client gives him, scratches beneath the surface to dig up more information, and then applies his background and experience to hammer out an understanding of the problem to be studied. C says that while the clients are educating her about their organization, she also teaches them by steering their train of thought in order to jointly explore the problem: they offer their perception of part of the problem and perhaps hint what they would like to try; she translates that into something that she can do for them and builds scenarios for suggestions and ideas as they go along. A emphasizes that the consultant must have sufficient breadth of experience in order to quickly look at the situation and be able to identify it in terms of what he has seen and done before; theoretical knowledge alone is not adequate (the need for experience will be further discussed in subsequent sections of "a practicing perspective ").

Studying the problem is an extension of defining the problem. It involves examining the site in detail, gathering the data, and recording it carefully. C tries to get an understanding of where, when, and how the clients get their information and what they do with it. B seeks out those in the organization who know the problem from experience; thus in a law firm, he talks with the secretaries, who often are the ones actually using the law library, as well as the lawyers. D and F claim there is usually someone in the organization who is behind the push for a library or information system and knows what is wanted.

In terms of approaches and methods, F suggests that the consultant should try anything, any method that will work; it all depends on the clients. If there is an existing system, she will ask the users what they hate about it and why. D employs a structured interview based on her own questionnaire which she uses from memory: she creates hypothetical situations, asking the clients to respond to them; she does this because she believes people are not used to thinking about such things without the consultant's help. E appreciates the value of such an approach, but has not seen any need to go beyond the basic questions about what the client uses and wants. Sometimes, the consultant will conduct a study of similar organizations or situations to better understand what can be done for the client.

PART III: PLANNING AND BEYOND

9. PLANNING: ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

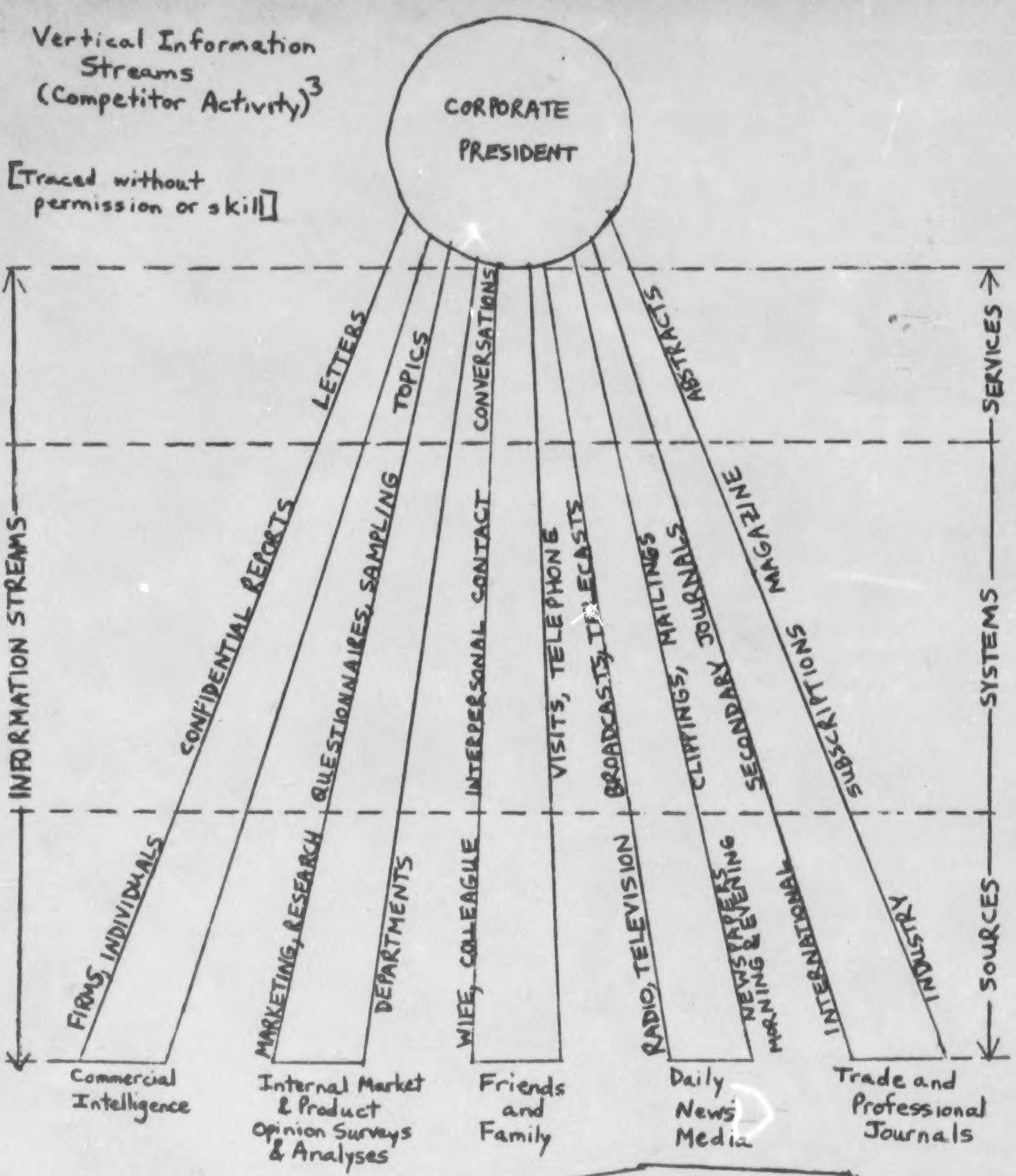
The Planning stage consists of the specification of the objectives to be achieved by any changes and the generation of alternative solutions or change strategies.[1] Horton's second step is the analysis and synthesis of the inventory and catalog of information resources. The analysis checks for overlap and duplication, gaps, redundancy, and inefficiency: from the analysis, objectives may be derived. Synthesis "weaves" the "threads left hanging loose" by the analysis, supplying clues and pointing to alternative courses of action.[2] As before, this chapter will concentrate on the principles and approaches, rather than the techniques and the tools; the emphasis will be on what needs to be done, not on how to do it.

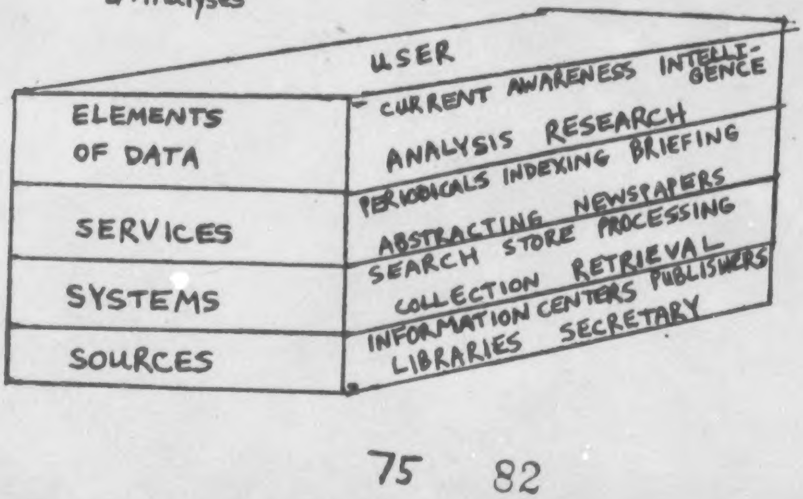
The analysis is based on Horton's conceptual "information analysis matrix" which consists, in layers from the bottom to the top, of sources--systems--services--elements of data--use (see diagram, page 75). This matrix is analyzed in several directions, each representing a flow of the information stream.

1) The "vertical information stream analysis" focuses on the flow of information "from origin or source to final use." Information is classified on a functional basis according to its end use or purpose: from this, a "family" of information resources which form a vertical channel providing this information can be identified. Each vertical channel is traced from its origin to primary and

Vertical Information Streams (Competitor Activity)[3]

[Traced without permission or skill]


CORPORATE PRESIDENT
LETTERS
TOPICS
CONVERSATIONS
ABSTRACTS
CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS
QUESTIONNAIRES, SAMPLING
INTERPERSONAL CONTACT
VISITS, TELEPHONE
BROADCASTS, TELECASTS
CLIPPINGS, MAILINGS
SECONDARY JOURNALS
SUBSCRIPTIONS MAGAZINE
FIRMS, INDIVIDUALS
MARKETING, RESEARCH
DEPARTMENTS
WIFE, COLLEAGUE
RADIO, TELEVISION
NEWSPAPERS MORNING & EVENING
INTERNATIONAL
INDUSTRY
INFORMATION STREAMS
SERVICES
SYSTEMS
SOURCES
Commercial Intelligence
Internal Market & Product Opinion Surveys & Analyses
Friends and Family
Daily News Media
Trade and Professional Journals


USER
CURRENT AWARENESS INTELLIGENCE
ELEMENTS OF DATA
ANALYSIS RESEARCH
PERIODICALS INDEXING BRIEFING
SERVICES
ABSTRACTING NEWSPAPERS
SEARCH STORE PROCESSING
SYSTEMS
COLLECTION RETRIEVAL
INFORMATION CENTERS PUBLISHERS
SOURCES
LIBRARIES SECRETARY

Information Analysis Matrix[4]

secondary sources to various systems which structure, organize, and process it to the services and products which finally deliver the information or data to the user. The purpose of the vertical analysis is to identify "actual or potentially duplicative information streams which are moving the same kind of data"; in this manner, overlaps, duplications, and gaps may be revealed. However, the analyst should take care to distinguish among vertical streams which are mutually complementary or provide checks and balances versus those which are merely duplicative. As a result of this vertical analysis, the analyst decides what ones to eliminate or modify in terms of frequency, volume, precision, or comprehensiveness.[5] Horton's illustrative example of a corporate president who needs information about the activities of his competitors is shown on page 75.

2) Horizontal information stream analysis focuses on the "lateral movement of information across functional boundaries." In other words, it studies each plane of the matrix--various sources, systems, services, items of information--and cuts across the vertical channels. Horizontal analysis aims to determine the extent to which a given class of information is generated by different sources, collected and processed by different systems, transferred and distributed by different services. It is possible to find essentially the same information in a "nightmare of cross currents and whirlpools": the corporate president

in Horton's diagram may have assistants and secretaries (functioning as information sources) with overlapping duties and he may receive redundant abstracts, files, and reports. One goal of this analysis is to reveal what tasks may be combined and which resources may be shared.[6]

3) Diagonal information stream analysis recognizes that there are informal communication channels which serve as shortcuts for crossing over the more formally established vertical channels. The informal interactions occur at various points along the vertical channel and may facilitate the flow of information because of the advantages of sharing resources and by-passing formal "obstacles." Thus, this analysis concentrates on the movement of information "between a point in one functional stream to a point in another functional stream." In Horton's illustration, a simple example of a "shortcut" might be for the corporate president to have a friend who is a reporter in the news media, thus he may receive a "tip" before the news is printed or broadcast.[7]

Synthesis is the creation of "gross design" alternatives. It serves as the foundation for an implementation plan. It requires creativity as well as skillful analysis: the "quality consultant shows true mettle at the implement plan stage."

> It is small comfort to be told what is amiss without being offered a realistic plan to tend to rectify the situation. (The only exception we think of is when both the unfortunate problem and the unpopular solution were known in advance and the consultant was called in primarily to serve as a scapegoat.)[8]

Bourne lists several ways of synthesizing an information system:

1) A common approach is to "copy, extrapolate, or modify some existing and successful system." "This is a useful approach, especially for the initial system design, with further re-design being done to make a closer match to the specific problem."

2) Another frequently used approach is to "develop new systems from existing building blocks" by looking around for "all the techniques, tricks, equipment, and gimmicks that are available" and pulling "a piece from here and a piece from there, and then patches these together in some coordinated manner while taking care of the loose ends." It is not usually necessary to check all the possibilities because "you can often take advantage of the fact that for some range of functions, one component is always better than all the other alternatives possible."

3) On rare occasions, it is possible or necessary to "develop a new or 'invented' system" in which the "major components or technique have no obvious ancestral background."

4) The existing system may be explained by "no conscious design," but that should not be the consultant's intent. Without a design, "systems come into being by historical accident, or by edict, or for some other reason."[9]

Faibisoff and Ely suggest a number of guidelines for the designers of information systems: these guidelines are derived from a wide range of user studies and provide a basis for the development of a user-oriented information system. One word of caution is in order: these guidelines are generalized and idealized; they may not be economically and/or politically suitable, desirable or feasible in any given case:

1. Identify the specific information the user actually needs or requires for what he is doing.
2. Identify the user in relation to his discipline or environment.
3. There must be interaction between the information provider and the user; feedback between the users and the system.
4. Information should be provided in a form suitable to its effective use; tailor it to the user's requirements.
5. Existing records should be broad enough in scope to provide required information and to allow for accidental discovery; a comprehensive system enables the user to fulfill yet unformulated needs.
6. The system should be so designed as to provide the right amount of information at the right time.
7. Information should be stored in such a way that it is not only available but easily accessible.
8. Standards must be developed to insure the utility of and accessibility of future information resources.
9. The system should assume that the user has not articulated his information need: the earlier discussion of the study of needs should make it clear that user needs can only be inferred--and not with total confidence.
10. The system should be compatible with the user's behavioral strategies for seeking information; the user should not have to conform to the system.
11. Since oral communication is an important feature of gathering information, the system should devise ways of facilitating the dissemination of such information.[10]

Vickers adds a twelfth guideline:

> I cannot overstress the importance of striking a proper balance between input and output activities, and it is generally a good principle to err on the side of devoting more effort to activities that are visibly useful to the user population.[11]

An information system should not become preoccupied with indexing and cataloging, building large stores of documents, or developing intricate retrieval systems; users "tend to be more interested in getting some useful output from the information service than in the mysteries of recall-precision ratios and Bradford-Zipf curves."[12]

The information resources must be ordered so that their effectiveness may be maximized for the users; Horton calls this "harmonizing."[13] He perceives three schools of thought regarding the "harnessing of information resources":

1. integrationist: Eliminate all redundancy, overlaps, and incompatibility; "by definition (!) the truly effective information system must be a closely linked set of organic subsystems."
2. permissivist: The system should "tap the pipes" of each independent subsystem; let each subsystem "do its own thing."
3. coordination: The systems approach.[14]

Horton is clearly biased in favor of coordination, but his arguments are persuasive. The permissivist encourages a suboptimal solution: system interfaces are neglected and incompatibility is unchecked. The integrationist strives to curtail or eliminate redundancies while establishing and enforcing standardized policies and programs; Horton claims the integrationist may also suboptimize via his overzealousness in streamlining the "unnecessary" for its own sake and forcing the existing subsystems to integrate.[15]

The coordination school is based upon two axioms:

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1. "the quality and responsiveness of an information system is only as good as the quality and responsiveness of its component information subsystems and the extent to which they are linked in a mutually reinforcing manner."
2. "poorly designed, badly managed, and ineffectively linked component systems (or subsystems) are cracks and flaws in the foundation of any information system and inevitably result in the production of inaccurate reports and inconsistent data, which ultimately leads to erroneous decisions and embarrassment."[16]

Mutually reinforcing systems should have: common or at least compatible definitions for like items of information; uniform coding schemes; "explicit crosswalk relationships between related functional information files" (horizontal and diagonal flow); and "integrity preserving" features in design (e.g., checks and balances). Thus, the coordinated system for information approaches the optimum.[17]

The consultant weighs the evidence from his study of the organization's information situation and uses it to do one of the following:

--determine how the ideal information system would meet their needs and recommend appropriate action for implementation (an active approach but politically not probable).

--determine how the optimum information system--the one "that is the most sophisticated and comprehensive that can be resource-justified in the present or near-term future"--would meet their needs and recommend appropriate action for implementation (best option).

--determine what portion of the optimum information system can be implemented the earliest and with the greatest probability of visible impact, thus establishing longer-term support for the complete system, and recommend appropriate action for immediate implementation (probably the most popular option).[18]

The path followed here must be jointly determined by the consultant and the client. The third option is the most popular because the consultant is rarely free to design an ideal system that will meet all the information needs of all potential users; cost-effective use of limited resources dictates what can be provided and for whom. The third option may be rephrased via two questions: 1) "Which part of the organization will derive the most practical benefit from a better information service?" 2) "To whom should a good service be provided to ensure the best chances of survival of the information unit?"[19]

What are the major alternatives? The statement of the problem introduced on page one of the paper postulated three levels of alternatives. These levels represent points along a spectrum of alternatives and provide one way of classifying the alternative configurations of the information system.

Level one usually will not have an information manager. Rather, the consultant proposes how the existing system may be improved through increased sharing, cooperation, coordination, centralization; or, via automation; or, by increased use of outside resources (public or private, profit or nonprofit). Borko reminds us "that a legitimate outcome of the analysis may be to make no changes in the existing system configuration."[20]

Level two adds an information manager to level one. In addition to managing the cooperative, coordinated efforts of his clients, the manager may provide his own subject knowledge, research experience and expertise, his knowledge of where to find the answer if he himself does not know it, and his awareness of outside resources to supplement what he has. The role of information manager is another role of the information counselor, thus he serves as an in-house consultant for information needs and resources.

Level three adds collection development to level two: this is the special library. In level two, the information manager may be described as a "librarian without a library"; in level three, the information manager/librarian is responsible for acquiring, processing, storing, and retrieving a collection of records or documents in addition to fulfilling the level two responsibilities. The collection may be selective or exhaustive--and the librarian should be fully aware of its limitations--but it should anticipate as well as respond to demand. A special library, in the client-oriented view advocated here, will be whatever its clients require it to be; thus, the problem is to find out what those requirements are and decide how the information manager(s) and collection may satisfy them.

Murdick and Ross suggest some practical bases for evaluating the alternatives:

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1. Compare the anticipated performance of the gross design with the objectives of the system as previously developed.
2. Prepare a rough or preliminary cost/effectiveness analysis of the system. This forces some quantified comparisons among systems.
3. Identify the strong and weak points of each alternative.
4. Expand the gross designs in more detail if none of these provides a preferred design.[21]

In essence, the systems analysis cycle repeats itself: the original system was analyzed as the problem; now, the original system (as one of the alternatives) is analyzed and evaluated along with the other alternative configurations, using Churchman's five basic considerations once again:

--The information system objectives are derived and formulated throughout the client-consultant relationship and the consultant's analysis:

> The values to be determined are to what extent does each alternative achieve each level of objective and to what extent does it lie within the specified constraints.[22]

--The information system is only one of the subsystems within the organization. According to Kolb and Frohman, any alternatives which are generated must pass through a "checklist" which serves to "remind the consultant that a change in one subsystem will affect other organizational subsystems."[23] Their checklist consists of two dimensions:

I. the power source involved in implementing changes suggested by the consultant
    A. formal
    B. expert
    C. coercive
    D. trust-based
II. the organizational subsystems
    A. information (the one being studied)
    B. people

(CONTINUED)

C. authority (both formal and informal)
D. tasks
E. policy (the organization's rules) and culture (the organization's norms and values)
F. environmental (internal physical environment and the external environment as a whole)[24]

--Information as a resource must be regarded in the context of the other resources, such as people, time, money, materials and equipment. The client and the consultant should rank the importance of information as a resource within the overall scale of priorities for the organization, in terms of its contribution to the accomplishment of the organization's total system objectives. The more important it is, the more it warrants the client's devotion of time, energy, and attention. The alternatives should be commensurate with the client's priorities; for example, the questions to ask about each alternative in this regard include:

> Which information streams are crucial to my needs? Which are essential but not critical? Which are flows which are in the "nice to have" category?[25]

--The resources needed to support the information system can also be considered in terms of feasibility: economic (are the funds available?), technical (does the know-how exist? is it available to the organization?), and operational (can it be done?).[26]

--The benefit/cost analysis and the analysis of alternative information system efficiency and effectiveness suffers from the lack of generally accepted rules. Quantitative, mathematical methods are applicable here, but first one needs to ask the right questions for each alternative:

> Are the goals and objectives, the purposes of the system, being achieved: Are things being done the right way? Are things being done at the right place? Are things being done in the right amount? Are things being done in the right order? Are things being done at the right cost? Are things being done by the right people, or by the right mix of men and machines? Are there additional things that should be done?[27]

To answer these questions, some system--even a crude and simple one--of measurement should be applied. The benefits should be quantified wherever possible and useful--even an approximate order of magnitude is helpful; however, the qualitative, intangible benefits defy such analysis. Finally, some weighting system should be followed to measure the benefits versus the costs and indicate the tradeoffs.[28]

Optner views the essence of selecting an alternative as a tradeoff.[29] Alternatives may differ in kind or in degree.[30] No one alternative can be ideally suited for all needs, thus, "Optimum means best in the sense of 'all things considered.' It does not mean 'the very best.'"[31] A major tradeoff is the make or buy decision: "does one develop (make) the information required or does one go to other (outside) sources to see if the information already exists and can be obtained more efficiently and effectively." Information brokers and system vendors have the expertise and can offer savings because of their economies of scale and specialization;[32] however, their systems and services may not be perfectly tailored to meet the needs. Automation or mechanization should not be viewed as a magical solution but as an alternative which may offer greater efficiency and effectiveness--particularly for operations consisting of well-structured, routine tasks--but may also require staff training and orientation or have a high installation or operating costs. Centralization of resources may exist in varying degrees: centralized resources provide greater economy and efficiency plus more comprehensive services; decentralized resources are closer to the operations they serve and allow for close personal contacts.[33] These are just a few examples of the macro-level tradeoff decisions. At this stage, the selection of an alternative is a "guesstimate":

> In practice, of course, one seldom goes through this process in a meticulous, methodical way. All too often, one has to dismiss certain possibilities for rather unscientific reasons.[34]

Finally, the consultant is ready to make the "objective presentation of these alternatives and the supporting evidence to the responsible decision makers, so that they may make appropriate decisions with respect to selecting one of the alternatives for design and implementation."[35] It is not the consultant's place to make the decision himself:

> The analyst's function is to provide the decision maker with an explicitly rational analysis. Fortunately he can frequently avoid the final decision process.[36]

Neuschel, in his article on "Presenting and Selling Systems Recommendations," offers some advice on presenting the proposal:

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> The most important rule in preparing for the formal presentation is that both form and content must be geared to (1) the background and interests of its recipients, and (2) the specific purpose of the presentation.[37]

His recommendations, which follow, are worth considering because a poor presentation can undermine even the best analysis and proposal: the information counselor, above all, should appreciate that communication is not achieved until the message is received.

The consultant first needs to identify his audience "and then estimate how it will receive, understand accept the message."[38] Gilchrist has a lot to say on this topic, much of it particularly pertinent to our situation:

> It is vital that the consultant identifies his audience at the beginning of the project, not only in order to guide the writing of the report, but because he is, in effect, determining the boundary within which he is working. At the tactical level this is obviously important from the point of view of presentation and technical treatment. The argument must be tailored to meet the understanding of the librarian or his manager. It is often the case that the report has to be prepared not only for the librarian and his immediate superior, but for other managers of the same and higher status, and the objective and style of the report will vary accordingly. Obviously the boundary should correspond with the consultant's competence, and though it is permissible to comment on features outside the boundary he should make recommendations only within the agreed boundary.[39]

The presentation may serve one of a number of different purposes, depending on the history of the client-consultant relationship and the original objectives of the consultation and analysis:

--Persuading the client to take action.

--Confirming facts previously discussed and recommendations already agreed on.

(CONTINUED)

--Testing the adequacy of the analyst's work or to check the client's understanding of the problem or proposal.

--Informing the audience of decisions made.

These purposes determine the amount and kinds of detail, supporting arguments and evidence required to achieve the desired effect.[40]

Next, the consultant must choose between an oral or a written report. Neuschel advocates an oral presentation to a small group because it provides the flexibility to immediately respond to the audience's verbal and nonverbal reactions and, he believes, it "elicits more warmth, understanding, and enthusiasm than even the best of written reports." Sometimes an oral presentation will not be able to reach everyone who needs to be reached. A written report may be preferred because it allows an extensive and detailed statement of the consultant's case to be put on record.[41]

The content of the presentation will follow the outline of analysis and prescription given on page one. It should include the following subjects, with the audience and the purpose guiding the emphasis each is given:

1. The nature, cause, and significance of the problem, along with how the study originated.
2. The breadth, depth, and limitations of the analysis.
3. Summary of the major findings and conclusions of the Diagnosis.
4. Summary of the recommendations and proposed alternatives.
5. The anticipated tangible and intangible benefits.
6. The cost and effects of the proposed changes.[42]

Finally, the consultant should not be content with just having a sound proposal. It "must be packaged attractively." The presentation should be one "that generates enthusiasm--that appeals to the imagination as well as to reason." In order to achieve the desired impact, the critical qualities are clarity and persuasiveness.[43]

The presentation of the proposal concludes the information counselor's consultancy. Gilchrist sums up the consultant's role:

> the consultant is concerned with planning but not operation, and so can act only as a catalyst. His recommendations must be acceptable to, and operable by, his client.[44]

Thus, the information counselor/consultant works as a general practitioner consulting the organization in terms of a strategic plan for its information problems. This does not mean that the counselor cannot be a specialist and a tactician as well or that there is no place for such a consultant: the groundwork established by the counseling outlined in this paper provides the basis from which the specialist can then design, implement, test, and evaluate the chosen system; the more the generalist can do, the easier the specialist's job becomes.

10. PLANNING AND BEYOND: A PRACTICING PERSPECTIVE

How do you create the proposal? How do you develop the alternatives?

The answer to this question must be prefaced with recognition of the fact that there are different kinds of proposals. According to F, a proposal prepared in response to a government request for proposal must be a very elaborate and detailed document because of formal government regulations and the fact that it is submitted as a competitive bid. In the private sector, a proposal may be more informal; moreover, it is often not submitted as a competitive bid. There are also differences in terms of the consultant's role: he may submit the proposal--sometimes having dome the system analysis and design for free--as a bid for an implementation job; this differs from the proposal intended to be the final product of the consultancy (i.e., expert advice) in terms of the activities paid for by the client, the detail and finality of the proposed alternatives, and the presence of competition (most of the consultants interviewed make every effort to avoid competitive bidding for pure consulting jobs).

There may be new problems coming up each day, but the consultants, relying on experience and know-how, insist there are no new kinds of problems. F states simply that in an information system certain known and established things must happen: you have to acquire the information, identify the materials, etc. Thus, the real question to be directed to the client is this: if you want these things to happen, how should we develop them for you? Others echo _F_'s assessment of the basic character of information problems: _C_ says there are no pat formulas, but in practice one develops a good feel for handling categories--set ranges --of information needs; _B_ finds his experience and knowledge of certain basic concepts are highly transferable from case to case. As Vickers, a consultant for Aslib, has said:

> After visiting and studying a large number of organiations, one begins to recognize common pattern of weakness or failure. One begins to understand the pathology of information systems.[1]

Developing ideas and alternatives calls upon the consultant's full repertoire. _A_, whose experience is primarily in information systems and automation, emphasizes the need to recognize problems and possible solutions from direct experience and the need to think analytically about the client's particular situation. _B_ finds that he can transfer his experience from one case to another among the law firms in which he specializes and even between law and business firms. _B_ also considers the proposal a very creative activity; basic concepts are applied, transferred, and modified for a given situation: for example, he has devised a catalog for the small law firm library which conceptually combines the inventory record of the shelflist with the user access of the card catalog--such a catalog is simple and economical enough for a small firm to use. F takes what has been done before or what people are talking about doing soon, seizes opportunities (one of her success stories involved taking advantage of the client's computer system and using it in the client's library). However, F warns that needs and technology differ in each case, thus one cannot keep redoing the same old library or system. D develops her ideas by thinking, talking with others, and considering what has worked elsewhere.

On what basis do you evaluate the alternatives and make a recommendation? How do you present your case?

A consultant can usually put together several alternatives. F evaluates these alternatives according to costs criteria, practicality, potential for implementation (is it do-able?), and by demonstrating the various tradeoffs; sometimes, you can point to one option as the way to go. E recommends preparing figures that are as firm and precise as possible when considering costs; this may be more applicable for the consultant who is bidding for an implementation job (which E frequently does). A says the good consultant has the ability to deal with a mix of what he is trying to do and what it will cost, plus what the alternatives are and their costs.

According to Autrey, the capable consultant must be able to determine the client management styles, understand the client's priorities, and reflect their priorities in his work.[2] This includes an understanding of "Politics" and "bandaids." F describes the "political" job as one in which the consultant is brought in to be blamed for a problem or unpopular but inevitable solution, or one in which there are opposing factions each courting the consultant's backing: F prefers honesty over playing along with the client's game, even if it causes flak. The "bandaids" refer to the short-term, partial solution which the client may prefer politically or economically (also: remember who is the client) as opposed to a long term, comprehensive plan which the consultant believes is needed. The consultants unanimously prefer the long term plan, but recognize the organizational realities which can force the adoption of a stopgap approach; thus, the "trick" is to make the stopgap a building block rather than a deadend. B lays out both short and long term possibilities. C and F create short-term solutions with the long-range in mind, so that the short-term forms a foundation for subsequent action. B tries to make the client aware of the growth and changes from what there is now to what they will be needing.

The proposal need not be the final word. F submits the proposal and sits with the client to confirm that what has been done is indeed what the client wants; she laments that it is not uncommon for changes in the client's plans, situation, or wants to require the consultant to return to drawing board--or even to drop the case. D also discusses the proposal to sound out her analysis of the situation and her approach to the problem. A sends in a draft for the client to validate his data and consider his recommendations before the presentation.

A supports his recommendations with a specific, well supported, validly argued case; it is unprofessional to involve one's ego by "selling" one's case or tearing down that of any opponents. C justifies the time and cost numbers by having the client walk through the idea-development process and calculations; she makes her ego subservient to the client's ego by crediting them with ideas initiated by her work. A and E warn of the dangers of alienating or losing the client by talking jargon or by obviously "talking down" to them; make the presentation on an appropriate, persuasive level.

What is the consultant's role? Where does the purely consulting work end and what happens next?

A isolated and explained the consultant's role: the consultant advises the client by matching things he knows, that perhaps the client does not know, with the situation in the client-organization of which the client may or may not know. A believes the consultant's most significant contribution lies in his analysis of the problem: ideally, he takes what was a tangled web of conflicting views, interests, and uncertainties and converts it into a comprehensible, specific picture. The advice or recommendations given by the consultant provide a focal point--something specific and concrete for the client to respond to; the proposal should be meaningful and even controversial enough for opponents to be able to verbalize their differences. Above all, A feels no consultant should ever think he can provide a better answer or make the decision for the client: the client may be more intimately involved with the situation and the consultant's report is merely one of the whole set of inputs sought and received by the decision-makers. The consultant's job is to help the client make an informed decision via his analysis and arguments--and it is the client's decision to make.

F outlines three kinds of consulting: 1) the visiting expert who only provides a brief definition of the problem and offers a few suggestions without an in-depth study or design (this is also the kind done by the Special Libraries Association Consultation Committee in its free half-day visits); 2) the good consultant whose advice extends at least through the design phase (E and F found it difficult to establish a generalized, conceptual cut-off point in terms of how detailed a design such a consultant should do); 3) the consultant who provides a free analysis and design as a prelude to bidding for a job--B, for example, does not usually consider himself hired until his proposal has been approved and signed.

Once the client's decision has been made, there is what A calls the "task." The role of the consultant at this point varies with the intent and the success of the initial consultancy: the proposal may serve as a bid for the information professional's design, implementation, and evaluation services either because it was intended to be such a bid or because the client was so impressed with the consulting experience that he invites the information counselor to act upon the selected recommendations and finish the job. C has been invited back by the client to rebid on successive stages of federal government agency jobs and to implement a computer system in a firm after educating them in automation. E has had small consulting jobs develop into long-term, continuing relationships. On the other hand, B cautions the consultant against promoting and creating a client dependency on the consultant's services: the consultant should never talk the client into something he does not need.

In the purest sense of the word, the consultant is the one who gives the advice rather than performing the task. In practice, however, "consulting" is used loosely to cover the whole gamut from start to finish: most of the consultants interviewed fit this loose definition. F found that her clients wanted action to go with the advice; besides which, her own interests lie in the entire "package"--design, implementation, and testing--because she likes to see if her design will actually work. On the same note, E particularly enjoys finishing what she starts. In addition, the nature of the consulting market and the variety of their interests induce the freelancers to engage in information broker jobs and part-time library work, among other things.

PART IV: THE INFORMATION COUNSELOR/CONSULTANT

11. THE INFORMATION COUNSELOR/CONSULTANT

This paper has looked at the "information counselor" from a generic standpoint, assuming that he is working as a general practitioner consulting the organization in terms of a strategic plan for its information problems. This does not mean that the counselor cannot be a specialist and a tactician as well or that there is no place for such a consultant. The purpose of a generic, systems approach is to call attention to the fact that the specialists have much in common which needs to be shared. At any rate, the groundwork established by the counseling outlined in this paper provides the basis from which the specialist can then design, implement, test, and evaluate the chosen system. The more the generalist can do, the easier the specialist's job becomes; the study can range from a one week "quick-and-dirty" to an extensive, detailed two-year project.[1]

In order to summarize all that has been presented in this report, it is most appropriate to look again at the information counselor and identify the qualities and abilities required for information counseling and consulting for the organization.

Hershfield, the author who introduced the information counselor concept, has suggested a number of areas of required expertise; his ideas are enhanced and supplemented by others in their discussions of business systems analysts and management consultants.

1) The counselor must be an expert in research methods to identify his clients, determine information needs, specify which resources are available or lacking to satisfy those needs, assess and improve his services, and to read and evaluate the literature which may apply to his situation. Hershfield advises:

> To be able to perform as suggested above, our information counselors should know and be able to use quantitative methods, philosophy of science, data gathering and analysis techniques, and documentary research.[2]

2) Ramsgard adds the quality of creativity: "The creative analyst is one who consistently builds on what is already available, to develop something new." Only through creative thinking can the counselor become "a man of alternatives."[3]

3) Ramsgard calls the analyst a "business generalist";[4] Alexander calls him an "organizational expert."[5] The counselor must acquire the awareness, appreciation, and understanding of organizational structure, policies, procedures, processes, objectives and goals.[6] This knowledge should be on both the generalized and specific localized levels so that he "has some understanding of the classical role of each function within the business and the jargon, peculiarities and interrelationships that never fail to exist."[7]

Combining these first three qualities,

> The professional analyst is the diagnostician, the man who can evaluate and prescribe for a business problem based upon its signs and symptoms. The expert analyst is a general practitioner who views the organization as a complete entity, understanding that one part is not isolated from the rest. He
>
> (CONTINUED)

> understands that any problem and any solution has some impact upon the entire corporate body.[8]

4) The counselor needs to be a "human relations expert" with a "large measure of human understanding."[9] Hershfield believes that in order to help individuals and groups meet their information needs--the counselor's primary purpose--then he "must focus first on human beings, and then, on information."[10] The counselor should be well-versed in interpersonal communication, understanding and capable of feeling empathy for the other and skilled in the art of interviewing, in order to treat "the human feelings, wants, desires and attitudes of each customer." Knowledge of small group communication is equally valuable because he needs to understand "the vital interrelationships between groups and the organization and himself." In short, he "must be part psychologist and sociologist."[11,12]

As a human relations expert the counselor is also a salesman and a teacher. As a salesman, "he is in reality selling better communication to the organization."[13] As a teacher, the counselor shares his professional information expertise: "As with most professional services, the contact must be one to one, the information specialist acting as guide, teacher and enabler."[14]

5) Last, but certainly not least, are the knowledge and skills in the design, operation, and management of systems for the acquisition, organization, storage, and retrieval of information.[15] In Alexander's words, "he

must be a technician,"[16] one who knows the capabilities and technologies of various methods and techniques. The client "cannot be expected to know the intricacies of information technology or its potential for every day use."[17]

The information counselor has been portrayed in this paper as a member of the consulting "profession"--not the consulting "business." The Institute of Management Consultants, Inc. explains the difference:

1. Competence to serve his clients; specialized training and knowledge.
2. Trust and confidence: The client trusts him because of the consultant's character and ethics and because of his professional competence.
3. Primacy of client interests: The client comes first, even over the consultant's own interests.
4. Independent position: This is the key to being a professional. The consultant's position should not even appear to prejudice his opportunity to be objective: 'the analyst is in a unique position to cross departmental lines, to follow transactions, and to evaluate the entire process. Perception of the objectives and goals of the organization is the rare but necessary talent that separates the amateur from the professional.'[18]
5. Profit as a by-product: The professional consultant's first objective is to provide a service; the profit which comes with the job is secondary.[19]

12. THE INFORMATION COUNSELOR/CONSULTANT: A PRACTICING PERSPECTIVE

What qualities make you a good and successful consultant?

It is pointless to completely separate the qualities of the competent professional from those of the successful entrepreneur in the information counselor profession/business: as C has said, they are greatly overlapping. There are some areas of consensus, with some variation reflecting individual experience: what follows is a survey of what consultants consider the necessary strengths.

The first broad class of qualities may be described as personality, traits, attitudes, and constitution. A Syracuse University School of Information Studies Workshop on alternative library careers summarized the responses of the people they surveyed, with the following characteristics among those listed: thick skin, diplomacy/tact, sense of humor, intelligence, imagination/creativity, sensitivity, initiative, common sense, self-confidence, ability to tolerate and work in ambiguous situations, physical stamina, persistence, optimism, attention to detail, ability to work under pressure, ability to critically analyze a situation and design solutions.[1] This list is fairly comprehensive in terms of the qualities mentioned in the interviews and in the other reading as well; some of those interviewed commented briefly on a few of these characteristics (often using different terms from those listed above):

(CONTINUED)

--D says chutzpah is the prime ingredient for success.

--G points to the need for a temperament and ability to strike out on one's own, to take responsibility, and work long, hard hours.

--A emphasizes being analytical, organized, and logical in one's thinking, and accuracy and attentiveness in gathering and recording data for study.

--B believes in having the enthusiasm and commitment to serve the client--not just earning one's own living. B also cites the imagination to modify, apply, and transfer concepts, and being adaptable and flexible to a variety of situations.

--E considers herself very organized and finds that lends itself to organizing information for others. E also warns of living with the fear of blowing the job because one may tackle projects in new or unfamiliar areas.

Next, information consulting calls for a variety of skills; the Syracuse University Workshop again provides a serviceable list: management skills; communication skills (including interpersonal and public relations, listening, interviewing); research skills (including methodology, statistics, sampling); organizational skills; persuasion; business savvy; and knowledge of such areas as systems analysis, indexing, cataloging, reference, data bases, audio-visual media.[2] The management skills have been discussed previously in Part I. A stressed the development of communication skills--both oral and written --for listening to what the client is saying and what underlies his words; for speaking in a language that is not cluttered with jargon nor insulting to the client's intelligence; and for writing a clear, direct, and concise proposal. With regards to research skills, C points to her social science research background which taught her how to prepare sound surveys. Some of the other skills will be noted in the next section on preparing for the information consultant's line of work.

Finally, there is the question of experience: is it necessary and, if so, how much is needed? F, who herself draws from thirty years of experience in information systems and technical libraries, speaks for the value of experience: it means having seen or done many different things from which to draw on; it allows one to say, "I've seen this before--this is a little bit like case such-and such"; in short, the experienced consultant does not have to constantly "re-invent the wheel." A also speaks with and for the voice of experience: it takes more than just theoretical knowledge to analyze and solve a problem quickly. B, to some extent, disagrees: he concedes that one does learn from mistakes and that experience refines and improves the quality of one's work; however, an individual's education and background can be put to effective use without the benefit of extensive consulting experience. E and G are examples of consultants who have entered the field of information consulting with little experience shortly after graduating from library school. Perhaps a better answer may be found by addressing the question of *competence*, rather than experience *per se*. According to *F*, there is no judging, on a one-to-ten scale, how competent or expert a consultant should be; however, the more competent, the better--for the client and, therefore, for the consultant. Moreover, *F* advises that the good consultant knows what he does not know and should be secure enough to admit his limits.

How do you prepare and train for a career in information consulting?

Obviously, there is a great deal to be learned; the question here is when and how do you learn it. The learning process is one which may begin with a formal professional education, but by no means does it end there. Perhaps the best answer to the question is the one provided by *E*: you cannot really prepare for consulting; you will always find questions you cnnnot answer.

What is there to be learned in school beyond the basic library school program? Alice Sizer Warner, co-founder of the major information consulting and brokerage firm, Warner-Eddison Associates, Inc., near Boston, believes an educational program should incorporate library science, information and computer science, and administration.[3] *E* concurs, recommending a complete and broad-based background. *G* credits his coursework in systems analysis, accounting, and computer science as particularly valuable. *D* offers a jaded point of view: it is important to have some background and education, but the degrees one has do not make a significant difference. *B* feels quite strongly that the library schools need to do a better job of presenting consulting as a viable alternative career by inviting enthusiastic guests for career-oriented programming, incorporating the consultant's perspective in the curriculum (e.g., cataloging applications outside the large research and public library), and encouraging consulting internships and courses in business and entrepreneurship.

Once out of school, the continuing, self-education process begins. *F* bluntly asserts that library school is not enough, that one rarely goes on to become an effective consultant directly out of school. *E* learned from her experience on the Special Libraries Association Consultation Committee during which she was exposed to various information problems and how to solve them in an economical and practical way. All of the consultants keep aware and up-to-date by reviewing the professional literature and advertisements, attending professional seminars and conferences, and meeting or talking with colleagues and professionals in other fields. *G*, who is still starting out, continues to enroll in some library school courses, such as library space planning. *C* described her extensive self-education efforts in areas such as business and record management, and micrographics; she also has sought to develop an expertise and "shop talk" ability in a wide variety of areas concerning her clients. Such a broad knowledge has enabled her to deal with a broad segment of the marketplace. In fact, C's firm has grown to the point where it has specialized staff and in-house training programs to prepare the staff to work in the field.

EPILOGUE

This paper has studied the business, the client-consultant relationship, and the work of the information counselor-as-consultant via a reconstruction of the literature, seasoned with a practicing perspective. Essentially, a generic, systems methodological framework has been constructed here: the specific methods and skills--which must be developed through study, training, practice, and experience--have not been detailed. The results of the information consultant's data-gathering alone "cannot tell you what to do; they can only give you some information which may help in the formation of a policy decision."[1] Ultimately, the information consultant's analysis and recommendations are no better than the approaches and techniques which produced them. He follows "some goal, direction, intuitive feeling, or structure as a guide"[2] for doing his work. This paper has tried to provide such guidance; perhaps it may suggest paths for further exploring--as well as performing--information counseling and consulting for the organization.

APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

The literature search is the foundation and bulk of this paper. This search provided: a) a review of the literature; b) the basis for extracting and synthesizing a theoretical framework for analyzing and proposing to meet a client's information needs; c) the necessary preparation for the subsequent interviews. The original research plan had called for a compilation of some case studies as well; however, the lack of explicit accounts in the literature and the difficulty of determining what kinds of cases would be especially illustrative both led this student to stick with the generalized approach.

The search was fraught with difficulties arising from the large number of areas--many not confined to the traditional library literature--touched upon by the topic of this paper; these areas are interrelated, but not effectively coordinated for conducting a comprehensive literature search. The subjects scanned include: business consulting, managerial planning, entrepreneurship, systems analysis, design and evaluation of information systems and management information systems, alternative librarianship.

The searching domain consisted of the following bibliographic sources: Public Affairs Information Services

Bulletin, Library Literature, Library and Information Sciences Abstracts, Business Periodicals Index; the card catalogs of the University Research Library, Graduate School of Management Library, Graduate School of Library and Information Science Laboratory on the campus of the University of California, Los Angeles; the card catalog of the Oviatt Library on the campus of the California State University at Northridge; this student's advisor, Dr. Plate, who recommended several items which had eluded this researcher's notice previously. The year 1970 was arbitrarily set as a cutoff date because the primary interests here are in current theory and practice, not in historical development. However, works dating back as far as 1960 have been used without hesitation, provided they had something valuable to offer in this student's judgment; still, no claims are made for the comprehensiveness of the search prior to 1970.

While the searching has been wide-ranging and comprehensive, the choice of materials used has been very selective. Some of the criteria are:

1. English language.
2. Available in the libraries mentioned above during the period of November 17, 1979 through April 30, 1980.
3. The work has been frequently cited by others (a seminal work) and/or it presents the material in a particularly insightful, helpful, comprehensive or useful manner (purely subjective judgment).
4. Unspecified arbitrary factors.

After the foundation of this study had been established, the in-depth personal interviews of practicing professional information consultants built upon that foundation by balancing the research with a pragmatic perspective derived from actual professional practice and experience. Here again, it had been hoped that some case studies, based on direct observation of the consultant at work or second-hand via the consultant during the interview, could be used: the opportunity for the former never materialized and the need for confidentiality plus the absence of documented detail eliminated the latter.

Several directories of consultants are available, but the most up-to-date, localized directory of information consultants was chosen as the basis for selecting the consultants to interview; the directory is the one compiled for the Southern California Chapter of the Special Libraries Association's Consultation Committee. This directory lists fourteen information-related firms; seven of them were selected according to their geographic proximity to the University of California, Los Angeles and their relevant services. This listing was supplemented by a couple of names suggested by Dr. Plate, and a panel discussion of consultants held during a session of Dr. Plate's special libraries course.

It should be emphasized that this was an exploratory effort limited geographically (within reach of the public transportation from UCLA) and temporally (February-April 1980). No effort was made to be comprehensive or representative in the sampling of the consultants. The solicitation letters and follow-up telephone calls succeeded in producing interviews with six information consultants practicing in the Los Angeles and Orange County areas during 1979-1980, to go along with the previously observed panel discussion on alternative librarianship and perusal of some published workshop proceedings reporting on individual experiences (Copies of the solicitation and follow-up letters and a table identifying--without naming --the consultants interviewed are provided following immediately after this text.) Please note that the interviewees will be kept anonymous in this paper to protect this student and to preserve their reputations and integrity; there was simply not enough time to double-check their statements and confirm that they did indeed say--and mean--what they had been recorded as saying.

The interviews were essentially free-flowing, one to-one discussions (averaging about 70 minutes in length) which loosely followed a prepared checklist of questions (a copy of this checklist is provided along with the letters and list of interviews). No notes were taken; rather, the interviews were recorded on tape to facilitate this interviewer's active participation in the discussions. Unfortunately, the recordings were of variable quality: the one for Consultant E was virtually inaudible, thus some of the comments reported from that interview are taken from memory. The unstructured nature of the interviews resulted in the uneven coverage and emphasis given to various topics; moreover, this student was learning about the subject and developing as an interviewer as the project progressed. Therefore, in light of all the limitations incumbent upon this interview methodology, one may judge the findings as being--at best--suggestive, if not indicative, of actual, current practice and experience in the field.

INTERVIEW CHRONOLOGY

CONSULTANT	LOCATION OF INTERVIEW	DATE
A	Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of California, Los Angeles	27 February 1980
B	Ship's Westwood Restaurant Los Angeles, California	4 March 1980
C	General Lee's Man Jen Low (Restaurant) Chinatown, Los Angeles, California	7 March 1980
D	Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of California, Los Angeles	12 March 1980
E	Trapani LaVine and Company Certified Public Accountants Los Angeles, California	26 March 1980
F	Los Angeles Times Library Los Angeles, California	9 April 1980
G,C,E	Alternatives in Librarianship Personal notes taken during a panel discussion at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Los Angeles, California	16 November 1979

MEET THE CONSULTANTS

Consultant A is an eminent information scientist and a leading faculty member of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of California, Los Angeles. His twenty-year consulting career has covered a wide range of projects all over the United States.

Consultant B began his consulting career while working at a university library, specializing primarily in law firms. After establishing himself, he chose to work as a part-time freelance consultant and information broker in the Los Angeles area.

Consultant C established her consulting firm as a partnership in the early 1970s in Orange County and it has grown to have a staff of over twenty people. Her firm aims to serve medium-sized organizations and has handled government contracts, consulting in nearly all aspects of librarianship and information management.

Consultant D currently consults part-time to supplement her income as a faculty member of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of California, Los Angeles. Previously, she has worked both independently and as a member of a consulting firm. She specializes in information system design.

Consultant E began her consulting career by serving on the Southern California Chapter Special Libraries Association's Consultation Committee within a year of her graduation from library school. She became a freelancer shortly afterwards, while continuing to serve on the Consultation Committee.

Consultant F, who has extensive experience in technical libraries and information systems, started consulting while working as a special librarian. She later joined a consulting firm and finally started her own small firm in the late 1970s.

Consultant G is a very recent graduate of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of California, Los Angeles. He started a firm with two fellow graduates: they are still in the process of gaining experience and cultivating contacts.

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Questions about the interviewee:

What kind of consulting work have you done?
- --have you worked with an organization without any internal information service or special library?
- --what categories of organizations have you worked with: business, research and development, government, educational, social?
- --what forms of information management have you worked with: libraries, information centers, records, archives, reports control, forms management, word processing, publishing, etc.?

How do your clients find out about you?
- --do they "check you out" before they meet with you?
- --do you advertise and/or actively solicit?

What personal qualities, background, education, philosophy, knowledge, skills do you have that make you or any colleagues you know successful information consultants?

What characteristics of competence, expertise, experience, ethics are required to make an information consultant a professional?

How do You select a client?
- --what factors shape your decision to agree to meet (or solicit such a meeting) with a prospective client?
- --how well do you feel consultants are chosen by clients? Is it still "catch-as-catch-can"?

Describe the relationship between you and a client:

What kind of rapport or "psychological contract" do you try to establish?

What do you look for or expect in return from your clients?

Who is your client? The person who contacts you or the entire organization or a portion of the organization specified/represented by the contact client?

How open are you with other members of the organization?

Whose responsibility is it to promote ideas and staff support--the contact client's or yours?

How important is this "psychological" aspect relative to the work itself? Is this very much a "people business"?

How do you analyze the existing situation?

How do you go about defining the client's problem?

Do you test the client's evaluation of the situation--how?

How well must the problem be defined at the beginning and how much might it be redefined in the course of the consultation?

How do you study client needs and resources?

How would you characterize your approach: systems/integrated? Other?

Do you trust the client to express his needs or is it your responsibility to help them define their needs?

What members of the organization do you study and why?

What are the questions you ask to find out what you want to know?

What methodologies do you use and why?

What are some of the problems you have encountered here?

How do you create the proposal?

Do you correlate available and/or possible resources with needs? How? Where do you get your ideas from?
 --copy or modify existing, successful systems
 --build from available building blocks or parts
 --invent something brand new

What are the major alternatives?
 --do you present different levels of services, increasing in complexity and cost?

How do you evaluate the alternatives and on what basis do you make a recommendation?
 --What questions need to be asked:
  --original objectives)
  --cost/effectiveness/benefit)
  --strengths and weaknesses) Trade-offs
  --available resources)
  --feasibility)
  --client's commitment)
 --How much is intuitive or based on hunches? How firm must your numbers be here?

How do you present your case?

General comments on the work:

Do you try to encourage a long-range planning view of an information problem or do you accept a stopgap first aid approach as well? Is this distinction important?

Where does the purely consulting work end and the design, implementation, testing begin?

How does the consultant's work vary for SLA 1/2-day consultation versus preparation of a bid proposal versus system analysis for the purposes of design?

Is the consultant a specialist or is that what the designer and implementer is?

FIRST LETTER

Consultant's Name
and Address here

Richard S. Kraus
801 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(date)

Dear ______:

I am a second-year student at UCLA's Graduate School of Library and Information Science, where I am working on my master's degree (M.L.S.). I am writing you with the hope that you may be able to help me with my specialization paper, which I plan to submit by May 1980.

My project is entitled, "Information Counseling and Consulting for the Organization." I first became interested in the topic because of a term paper option offered in Professor Kenneth Plate's course on special libraries, which I took Fall Quarter 1979 (last quarter): we were asked to study and analyze the information needs of an organization (business, research and development, government, educational, social) that does not have any internal information service or special library, and to prepare a report proposing various levels of service to meet those needs. I felt that such an experience would be worth a try, in spite of my doubts as to how I was to go about doing it.

I sent out a solicitation letter to six officers of an organization in which I had a personal interest in studying; I then followed up the letter with several phone calls. Unfortunately, no one seemed to remember seeing my letter and I received little encouragement for pursuing my project (no one exactly said no, but they were not tripping over themselves to say yes either). By the time I had learned my lessons (don't expect to succeed the first time and don't place all your bets on one horse), I realized that the quarter was about half over and I would have to come up with another project in a hurry.

I decided to return to my initial self-doubts about the assignment: what do I do? how do I do it? I did not feel my coursework nor my work experience had truly prepared me for taking on such a job. Dr. Plate had stressed that it was the kind of thing for which there was no "recipe," that I would have to play it by ear. He had further expressed an interest in seeing some attempt at developing such a recipe and with this encouragement I decided to try it myself. I divided the project into

FIRST LETTER

two parts: research of the literature (which served as my term paper for the course) and questioning the consultants who do this sort of work for a living.

In my research, I have been following a general approach in which the client's needs and available resources are emphasized, regardless of the form of information management that is ultimately selected (special library, Management Information System, document retrieval system, Selective Dissemination of Information, etc.). From the literature I have derived a theoretical and conceptual framework for the client-consultant relationship and the systems analysis and design involved in the preparation of a proposal report.

I would like an opportunity to interview you in order to discover and discuss your own ideas, approaches, practices, and experiences in this area. If you will pardon my borrowing a blurb from a sports how-to book, I want the full, straight, inside dope on how the pros do it because my research of the literature has only provided me with an essentially abstract or conceptual understanding of the subject.

I hope that you are able and willing to share your professional experience with me. I will call you by [day] [date] in order to respond to any questions or reservations you may have and, if possible, to arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient time and place.

Thank You for your time,

Richard S. Kraus

P.S. If you wish, you may contact my advisor:

Dr. Kenneth Plate
Graduate School of Library and Information Science
University of California, Los Angeles
405 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90024
(213) 825-1379

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Consultant's Name
and Address here

Richard S. Kraus
805 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(date)

Dear _____:

Thank you for offering your time and assistance. My interview is intended to be as much of a free-flowing conversation as possible: below is an excerpt from my interview checklist (it is by no means a questionnaire) showing the primary points of interest to me. In particular, I would like to encourage you to relate illustrative anecdotes or examples--actual or hypothetical--as well as describing "typical" approaches, practices, etc.

Questions about you:

What kinds of consulting work have you done?

How do your clients find out about you?

What personal qualities, background, education, philosophy, knowledge, skills do you have that make you or any colleagues you know successful information consultants?

What characteristics of competence, expertise, experience, ethics are required to make an information consultant a professional?

How do you select a client? What factors shape your decision to agree to meet with a prospective client?

Describe the relationship between you and the client:

What kind of rapport or "psychological contract" do you try to establish?

Who is your client? Is it the person who contacts you or the entire organization or a portion of the organization specified or represented by the contact client?

How important is this "psychological" aspect relative to the work itself? Is this very much a "people business"?

How do you analyze the existing situation?

How do you go about defining the client's problem?

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

How do you study client needs and resources?

What members and parts of the organization do you study?

What are the questions you ask to find out what you want to know?

What methodologies do you use?

How do you create the proposal?

Where do you get your ideas from?

How do you evaluate the alternative and on what basis do you make a recommendation?

How do you present your case?

General comments on consulting:

Do you try to encourage a long-range planning view of an information problem or do you accept a stopgap first aid approach as well? Is this distinction important?

Where does the purely consulting work end and the design, implementation, testing begin?

I hope you find this a helpful guide for preparing to meet with me. However, please do not feel obligated to answer all, or feel constrained to answer only, these questions. I am looking forward to meeting with you on [day, date, time, and place].

Thank You again,

Richard S. Kraus

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